

My Entire Class Has Been Reincarnated – I Became the Weakest Skeleton!

Arc 4: Dyeing the Blue Sea Crimson

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Chapter 43 — Melancholy of the Queen

“Suou-san has passed away?”

When he received that report, Tokihara was flipping the abacus.

After coming to this word, Tokihara wasn't exactly Tokihara. Being recognized as one of the many Pawns, he was hardly called by his individual name. However, because he stayed in the archipelago country Albadanba, which floated on the Rubeling Sea, and was making contribution one couldn't disregard within the blood clan, he was being called as the '*Pawn of Albadanba*' for convenience. *If you're going that far, you may as well call me Tokihara normally*, was his thought.

Now then, that report brought by Bishop Akeno was something astonishing in its own way to Tokihara.

Knight Suou. A young and vigorous vampire, yet his skill was certain. For someone like him to die meant a serious matter. Moreover, the old castle in the west that Suou and Akeno was staying was also a place where existed little possibility of foreign enemies attacking.

“The Queen rebellion is definite. One student awoke to Phase 3 and we fought against that guy.”

Akeno uninterestedly informed. «*Yea*», Tokihara muttered and wiped the lenses of his glasses.

“Well, it's a story I've already heard. The fact that the Queen has rebelled also means that our war potential can't be replenished. I heard that the vampires who have started skirmishes everywhere are also withdrawing temporarily. It's reckless as expected. Because it's something that all the oni together have failed when they tried it 70, 80 years ago.”

“I plan to take along the high elf and go to the King's place.”

“So you're expressly crossing the sea for that reason?”

“There's one more thing I want to request.”

Looking at Akeno who said so, what Tokihara thought was that she had surprisingly calmed down then.

3 years ago — speaking in terms of the former world, Tokihara had already abandoned the company he was managing and located on-site over here. It was for the sake of laying the foundation for the blood clan's activities. Thereafter, trouble seemed to have cropped up with the bunch of the Temple Knight Order of the Vatican and the Special Superpower Countermeasure Ministry Office. He heard that it was then that Akeno Miyabi took an injury to her brain. Since the Transference Denaturation Gate and Ghoul Transformation Virus she advocated were the main points of the plan, they couldn't afford to part with her intellect. It was worth it to exhaust all means possible and they managed to keep Akeno and that intellect of her, but considerable defects remained in her intelligence and emotions. It had become necessary to periodically perform cleanup to her brain.

Probably, the Akeno at the moment was right after she finished that. So it would be okay even if she took independent action for a while. Speaking of what to worry about, it was that every *cleanup* would cause anomaly to her mind little by little, but that was taken into consideration by both the King and Akeno herself.

That Suou who could properly took her reins no matter what kind of status Akeno was in, had died may be a serious blow as expected. While thinking about that sort of things, Tokihara was listening to Akeno's story.

"There's a possibility that the bunch the Queen is leading may go through this Albadanba."

"Hou."

"The occasion when they head east from the ruined kingdom has been sighted. They will eventually come out to the coast."

"From there, there's a choice of going northward along the coast, isn't it?"

Putting on the glasses he finished wiping, Tokihara enquired.

"Not that there's none, but it's a choice they can't take if they have even a little bit knowledge about this world. If they go along the coast, they will bump against the country of the fire people. The bunch over there is exclusive."

"I see."

He asked but even Tokihara didn't think that they would be stupidly honest enough to advance along the coast. Because it was considerably risky to advance along the coast even when assuming they were heading for the east. Since the Filnand Dragon Knight Kingdom, Pirika Southern Kingdom, etc., couldn't disregard the Central Empire's intention, they who were monster might very well be capture if things went wrong.

Going to sea is the realistic choice. Except for the fact whether they have decent navigation technique that is.

"The Queen, I wonder where are they going?"

"I'm not very good at making conjecture based on human's thinking and emotion. But there's no refuge for the Queen and others either way. It's the same wherever they go."

"Most reasonable."

"I'm leaving behind several Pawns. You take command of those guys. If those guys come to Albadanba, hinder them as much as possible, but if it's impossible, find out their destination."

It's the same wherever they go, despite saying so, find out their destination, was it? Well, I know what you want to say.

For the blood clan, the best choice would be to capture everyone of those guys, starting from the Queen. As long as they secured their person, there would be any amount of methods to make them do what they were told. But he couldn't help saying that it had already entered a considerable difficult stage. There was the guy who seemed to have killed Suou as opponent.

Honestly speaking, in this case, he at least would like to find out even just where the opponents were and what was their purpose. As long as they know the detailed location, the King could give a 'command' to the Queen even from far away, the prospect would open in that case.

"Roger that. Lastly, it's waiting for the King's instruction, isn't it?"

Said Tokihara. Akeno also nodded.

"Do we prioritize securing the Queen even if we kill those buys, or thoroughly ignore them? We can't say anything regarding that unless we ask for the King's instruction."

“I understand. Just to confirm, does the King has an accurate grasp of you or my location?”

“You’re asking such a thing now? This conversation, everything is being leaked to the King. You don’t mean to cause unnecessary feelings, yeah?”

“Hahaha, no way that could be.”

Once your blood is dedicated to the King, you can never escape from the King’s monitoring. The Queen of the time in the former world was tremendously obedient to the King, therefore it was fine even if she didn’t dedicate her blood and was overlooked. The King himself probably also had the reason that he didn’t feel any ill will toward the Queen.

It backfired as a result. So would the King kill the Queen? Whether he felt like killing or forgiving her rebellion, either way, once the King and the Queen confronted each other, the Queen would be compelled to yield regardless of whether she was willing or not. Because the King’s domination authority was absolute.

“It would be best if we can collect the Queen’s blood, yeah?”

When Tokihara enquired so, Akeno widen her eyes in surprise.

“It’s best but difficult. She won’t go out on the front line too much.”

“Well, I guess so. Let’s me also think about various things.”

It had indeed been 9 years since he put himself in the service of the Maritime United Nations Albadanba. In this world time, it was 9 years.

It was long, but thanks to that the foundation had been considerably solidified. This archipelago country where the domination of the Empire was thin, was optimum to perform preliminary preparation for the blood clan’s migration. At first, Tokihara was also being doubted, but now he was entrusted the management of one island, and was even permitted to attend the Chieftain Parliament.

If he made the best use of his position, there would be various ways of doing things.

Everything would come to nothing if they just passed by though.

If they were to cross the sea where it seemed imperceptible to the Empire, this Albadanba would be an unavoidable key-point. The possibility could be said

to be high.

“I have overstayed.”

Saying so, Akeno turned her back to Tokihara.

“You’re going already?”

“Ahh. While that high elf is still obedient.”

Obedient, she said, that would also be a little different. When the ship Akeno was on reached this island, Tokihara had also saw that high elf boy. His was a face of receiving a shock and moping around. What was probably noticeable was that he was building a friendly relationship with the deceased Suou.

“Akeno-san, you’re not going into mourning or something?”

Despite thinking it was unnecessary, he talked. Suddenly, Akeno stopped her feet.

“About Suou?”

“Yes. I was told that you two were close.”

“We were certainly close. Therefore, I intend to take revenge someday.”

Akeno went out of the room. Contrary to expectations, she planned to take revenge, it seemed some melancholy parts still remained.

Tokihara didn’t know the series of events that became the impetus for Suou being killed in the first place. But even if he knew, he would think that Akeno’s anger that Suou was killed, was justified. Being killed led to kill, kill led to being killed. Such exchanges between vampires and humans had been going on for the past 1000 years.

“The King too, I wish he would just quietly stay in a corner of the continent without thinking about absurd things such as invading the empire.”

Well, is it impossible since we’re vampires? We will eventually dry up if we don’t suck blood.

They had tried various things after coming here, but it was no good unless it was human’s blood. Even elf was no good, beastkin was also no good. Both lizardman and dwarf were hopeless. And since they had to suck human’s blood, the seam would come out from somewhere.

After all, it was the same in the former world. *It’s a body of karma*, Tokihara

thought.

Speaking of which, I haven't sucked blood this past month. Shall I go catch some children who go out to play on the beach before sunset when the people who go out are gone?

Tokihara clanged his fangs and dressed up to go outside.

“Ne~, Kyouusuke-kun. Akai-san, isn’t she irritated recently?”

Since Rin started saying so, Kyouusuke looked at Akai Asuka, who was sitting in a place some distance away in the dining room.

Certainly, he could confirm that she sullenly was clanging her teeth. It was ill mannered gesture for that Queen. In the tray in front of her, forest rabbit steak and vegetable garnish, then the staple potatoes were arranged. Akai didn’t show any sign of putting her hands on those at all. He had certainly often see her like that these days.

Even if he said these days, it had been only a few days. One week had yet to pass since the battle fierce battle with Suou and the others ended and they left that old castle and started heading for the east.

“It may be the fault of not sucking blood.”

Fuyo fuyo, while floating, Akira said such a thing. Kyouusuke crossed his arms.

“Speaking of which, Akai is a vampire. After coming here, she still hasn’t suck blood even once, yeah?”

“At least, it’s the case for human’s blood. Not that there’s no possibility of her stealthily sucking blood during the stay in the knight kingdom, however.”

“She has just been eating only the same food as us until now, isn’t she?”

Akai Asuka was a vampire. Even so, it wasn’t the case that she became a ‘*vampire*’ by passing through Transference Denaturation Gate like Kyouusuke and the others. She was a natural born vampire. And although she hadn’t declare it for sure, she should have sucked human’s blood under the cover of night even when they were in the former world.

That, she couldn’t do for more than one and a half month. For her and the vampires, the lifeblood of human would be something like luxury goods?

“But, it’s that, isn’t it. If she unskillfully suck blood, she will increase the vampires, isn’t she?”

“They won’t particularly increase even if she sucks blood—.”

When Rin muttered, Inugami Hibiki holding a tray said so from behind with a spitting voice.

Kyousuke surprisedly looked at what was on her hand.

“Huh, Inugami, you’ve started to cleanup the dishes by yourself.”

“It’s because Sakuma is noisy.”

“Ne~ ne~, Hibiki-chan, what do you mean by *‘they won’t increase even if she sucks blood’?*”

Rin tugged at the hem of Inugami’s sailor uniform. Kyousuke and Akira also nodded.

In the image Kyousuke and the others had of vampire, they quench their thirst by sucking blood, and then the sucked partner changes into a vampire. They were discussing based on such a major premise in their mind, but Inugami said different.

Inugami Hibiki, similar to Akai, was a werewolf girl even at the time in the former world. With the reason that she had a deep destiny with the vampire clan, she would have a reasonable knowledge of their mode of life. Inugami clicked her tongue a little, but soon thoroughly taught them.

“Like I said, it doesn’t mean the other party will become a vampire just by sucking blood. It’s just sucking blood. Well, it seems bearable even without sucking if it’s about a month though.”

“He~.”

Tapotapo, Rin, while hopping up and down, backchanneled.

“Certainly, it would be like a rat formula if they become vampire every time you suck blood, and the Earth would be covered by them in a blink of an eye.”

Akira also nodded, seemingly convinced.

“Even so, one month has already passed long ago.”

“So she reaches the limit of her patience, doesn’t she? Well, it got nothing to do with me though.”

Saying that much, Inugami briskly walked away.

After seeing her off, Kyousuke, Rin, Akira, the 3 people met face to face. No, no one had face beside Kyousuke, but let’s go with face to face for now. First to open his mouth was Kyousuke.

“What do you think?”

“About that, I would like to hear the independent opinion of Kyouzuke-kun who outgrew the troublesome puberty.”

“I agree. Kyouzuke, what do you think?”

“It’s certainly frank being treated like that, but.... No well, Akai is simply too preoccupied to suck blood because of the various tension so far, since that was solved in one go just recently, the blood sucking impulse has returned or something, I guess?”

Akai had revealed her lineage and true identity to the classmates. Although confusion had more or less been born in the class, they finally started accepting her. But then, there were many students who didn’t know the fact that Akai was «*trying to use the classmates to kill the King*». Nevertheless, by talking to Kyouzuke, Ryuzaki and Sakuma, etc., a considerably burden should have been lifted from her shoulders.

Because of that, the blood sucking impulse she had endured so far bounced back in go. *It’s that sort of thing*, Kyouzuke guessed.

“Well–, nothing other than that, isn’t it?”

Rin also nodded.

“I guess it’s no good if it’s not human. Can she not solicit blood from Sakuma or Harui or someone, I thought, but.”

“Impossible, isn’t it? Since even the blood of captured animals around here seems fine if she can do that.”

Human’s blood? Thinking about the future, it was something difficult to obtain.

The heavy cruiser branch school that the students were riding was heading toward the sea after this. Once they reached the sea, they would use the materials secured in the old castle to renovate the branch school. Afterward, they would journey to the east.

On the south side of the continent, the influence of the Empire was firmly rooted so there was a possibility of causing unnecessary conflict. Therefore, they would bypass the seaside and take a roundabout path to the place of destination in the east. In the south, greatly protruded from southeast of the

continent was Werneus peninsula where the influence of the Empire was thin even for the southern part. From there, they were going to go northward along the coastlands of the east, which summed up the plan Ryuzaki presented.

That is to say, they were going to go out to sea. The sea where there was no human.

“Perhaps, we’re going to approach an island country as a stopover so she’s going to have to endure until then, isn’t she?”

“As for when we arrive at the island country, whether we can have people obediently share blood is another problem...”

«*Homework is as much as a mountain*» was the slogan of 2 year class 4, and a new homework had just been added again. Kyouzuke was a high-school student as well. Both homework and assignments were something he would like to refuse at all cost, but no matter how much he refuse, homework, like a devil, would still rained down on him nonstop.

Akai was still irritated. Her teeth clanging, she stabbed the steak and carried it to her mouth. The vegetable garnish and potatoes weren’t touched at all. Without cleaning up the dishes and left it as it was, she roughly stood up from her seat and left the dining room behind. Even if she was being silent when she got into a bad mood, anger would still dwell in her, so the other classmates fearfully cleared away from her path.

“Ne~, Kyouzuke-kun.”

Rin pecked at Kyouzuke’s bone a little.

“Nn?”

“Kyouzuke-kun, supposing you weren’t a skeleton, I thought about how Akai-san gave you blood? And, if I saw that scene, I would get a little unpleasant feeling, so I thought but, since it’s Kyouzuke-kun, anything could happened, and...”

“Himemizu.”

Faster than Kyouzuke could answer, Akira spoke out.

“Ah, yes. What is it legal wife-sama?”

“You should say such a thing steadily. Kyouzuke is the Happy Prince ([wiki](#)) who

will unsparingly give every golden leaf covering his body to others, but if you say you hate it, he wouldn't do that. You, are the one who grasps the reins of Kyouzuke now. Think of it as a big deal."

"I see I see."

Such a story isn't what you should say in front of the person himself, don't you think?, Kyouzuke thought.

He thought but, well, he couldn't deny it.

Rin accepted the empty Kyouzuke, and if there were anything lacking, she said she would compensate for it. Thanks to that Kyouzuke was able to recover. If said if there was any dramatic change compared to before then such a thing completely didn't exist, but at least, his awareness concerning Rin had changed. If she said she hate something, he would make it a rule not to do it.

If there was something she said she hated, yet he still wanted to do it, in that case it means his contents were growing so it would be a delightful thing. The would be conflict, but for such a day to come itself, was something Rin felt like welcoming as well. Because Kyouzuke would be able to stand comfortably.

"Well, it's as Akira said. Since I'm such an idiot as ever, the brake won't work in such places though."

"I will put the brakes on. All righty. Leave it to me."

Rin made a fist with her whole body, then took a gesture of hitting his chest. She was a slime with dynamic emotional expressions as ever.

"Well, in the end, I feel that it doesn't really change from up to now, though. But I'm expecting a lot from Himemizu. If you, you're going to change Kyouzuke."

"Ye-es, I will do my be-est."

"Like I said, don't say such things in front of the person himself..."

In order to cleaned up the dishes, Kyouzuke, for now, took his tray and stood up.

The heavy cruiser branch school was going favorably toward the east. That fact that the caterpillar was mowing dow trees seemed like destruction of nature so it didn't feel very good, but since they couldn't advance otherwise so it couldn't be help. They departed the ruined country a few days ago, salt water

was gradually mixing in the wind. The sea should be close.

Sea? Sakuma Sachiko, while absentmindedly gazing at the scenery on the deck, thought.

Kumosaki Itomi, who was in charge of sewing, had started making swimsuits for women. Although it was the sea, it didn't mean they were going to go swimming in the sea, but it seemed that it seemed to not matter for her if there was a chance to make clothes. Boys are boys, they were greatly delighted, Hakuba for example, was visiting Kumosaki's sewing room almost everyday, in addition to his visits to Washio's portrait.

These past few days, there was no big battle and things were calming down, for Sakuma as well, various things to think about had increased.

About Akai Asuka. About Inugami Hibiki. About Utsurogi Kyousuke. In addition to those, about Okama Kaoru as well. According to Goubayashi story, he, who was called Kaoruko in the class, seemed to have promised to meet in the east. Before going out to sea, she would like to link up with Kaoru somehow.

"Kaoru-chan, is she well..."

"Well, definitely not well. It's that guy after all."

Answering her soliloquy was Akai Asuka who was standing beside her before she knew it.

Akai and Sakuma had known each other since kindergarten, but adding Okama Kaoru here was from the time of primary school. Gender, there wasn't much awareness of such a thing. Kaoru's girl power had always been high since the old day. Building up Akai's make-up and fashion sense, teaching cooking and sewing to Sakuma, everything was Kaoru's deeds.

Kaoru was always energetic and bright, but when reincarnating as an incubus, he was seriously depressed. *«If it's like this, becoming kraken or Malboro would be much better»*, was the speech of the person himself.

"Goubayashi has returned, Kaoru has surely faced down his problem as well. Sachi, I'm much more relieved about him than you now."

"Re—really..."

"If Kaoru sees the condition that Himemizu is sticking to Utsurogi, won't you be

told something again?”

Being told so, Sakuma unintentionally felt like becoming smaller.

Certainly, he would say it. «*Because you keep standing around like an idiot, Utsurogi-kun has been stolen, isn't he!?*» It would seemed normal for him to say that. Sakuma didn't particularly think that he was stolen, not the least bit, but surely something would be said about such a halfhearted attitude of her.

Let's change the topic. The topic. Let's change what to think about.
Yes, it's Akai. She who had came next nearby unnoticed. There was something about her that Sakuma would like to asked too.

“Asuka-chan, your condition seems bad lately, are you okay?”
“I'm fine. Is not what I can say. It's because I haven't sucked blood recently.”

Gachigachi, Looking at Akai's teeth clanking, Sakuma surprisedly opened her eyes wide.

“Really, Asuka-chan...”
“When entering the Knight Kingdom, I should've sucked at least one person even if forcibly. Well, I'm enduring but, it's also dangerous if it pass 2 months.”

Dangerous, what did she mean by that? It was something Sakuma was unable to judge. Was it in an emotional meaning, or possibly a more serious meaning of affecting her life? Sakuma motionlessly gazed at her arm peeking out from the sleeve of her once piece, then she enquired Akai.

“Asuka-chan.... My blood, suck...?”

The one to open her eyes wide this time was Akai.

“Eh, no.... It's okay. I mean, since it doesn't mean it can be appeased even if I suck blood of those other than human.”

“Ah, that's right. Sorry...”

“If it's Sachi when you're human, there were several times I thought I want to suck blood though.”

“Eh, eehhh—...”

It was difficult whether or not she should think of it as an honor. She think it wasn't the case that she was only seen as food in particular, but would the

phrase «*a friend charming even as food*» really be established as words of praise between human and vampire? For Sakuma who had read many fictions, episodes coming out from several stories came to her mind, but this here was a true story.

“Well, since that’s the reason, I would like to suck human’s blood but...”

Akai said so, her teeth clanking. Sakuma’s consciousness was brought back in one go.

“...Ahh, it’s okay. Since I can pay attention so that I won’t become a lethal dose.”

“Y–yes? It’s good if that’s the case ... isn’t it?”

“The problem is how long is it going to take until we meet human...”

Her muttering voice slipped into the wind and disappeared.

Nevertheless, Akai’s wish would be granted only one day later.

I saw the sea, when hearing that report, the students crowded into the deck all together.

“Finally the sea. My fins are ringing.”

“It’s not your arms?”

Uozumi Sakeichiro muttered with heartfelt enjoyment, Nekomiya Miya questioned him. The students’ reaction was diverse, but most students appeared like their heart was dancing to the opening horizon before their eyes. Only Hanazono who kept the vegetable garden on the deck was making a complicated expression, and started preparing the enclosure to protect the crops from the salty sea breeze.

Naturally, Kyousuke group also came to the deck. Rin was happily bouncing but Akira’s face is turning little blue ... wasn’t what happened, he was making a face that seemed low in fire power. He who was a mass of flame would probably die if he fall in water, in the first place, he wouldn’t be released from seasickness for quite a while after this so that feeling of his too was understandable.

“Oi Akira, you okay...?”

“It may be no good. Since we’re going to live on shore for a few days for

renovation, I decide to enjoy it as much as possible...”

The voice was trembling to the point of pitiable.

“Ah—, everyone, please listen!”

Class rep Ryuzaki came along the as the classmates were being noisy, naturally, together with Goubayashi.

“We’re going to the beach after this! Once arrive, I plan to divide into the renovation team centered on Kuremori, and the exploration team to look for Kaoruko as well as explore the surrounding! Then Uozumi siblings and Rin, since there’s something I would like to request, please stay!”

“Oh, I was nominated.”

At his feet, **taapon**, Rin bounced. Akira, his flames still pale, gave explanation.

“Probably he’s going to experiment if Himemizu can take in sea water. Thereafter, if she can separate salt and water, the voyage will be comfortable as well.”

“Ouou.... I’m completely being treated as a filtration device.... But, what will Kyousuke-kun do? If I unified with this entire ocean...”

“What will I do ... what should I do? For now, it seems like it will be a lot easier to get back Kogane.”

However, Rin was going to take independent action in this case. Since Kyousuke would probably be added to the exploration team, it would be reasonable. Just that Kyousuke was powerless without his combine partner, so Akira would be forcibly dragged along.

Ryuzaki continued further.

“The specific members will be decided after this, according to Kuremori the renovation team will need fire power. Hino, is your motion sickness okay?”

“Nn, ahh.... I’m okay. If rest a little, I can put out until about 1000 degree.”

Apparently, Akira was going to enter the stay behind group as well. And now that it came to this, the two of them would break up unless Kyousuke was put into the renovation team. Just little, panicked.

“Oh no, it appears to be the time for Kyousuke’s solo debut as well.... I’m so moved...”

“Eh, no. Wait a bit. It’s impossible alone as expected.”

“There’s nothing impossible now. You can say it’s a good chance to try the effect of Characteristics Amplification to others as well. As expected, EX combine seems difficult unless you have good coordination with each other. Since you was able to be independent from me, next is independent from Himemizu.”

This feels you’re been thoroughly pampered so far then so suddenly you’re thrown away.

Well, I guess there isn’t any strong monster in this area, it may be time to learn a new battle style that doesn’t rely on these two, surely. It may be hard for Ryuzaki to put together the parties as well if the combination is fixed no matter how long time passes.

Kyousuke, looked at the students whose heart was dancing to the sea, and started to examine them quite seriously, *with whom will it be easy to try the effect of Characteristics Amplification?*

Chapter 44 — Saa-chan Is the Group Leader

“Oh, Utsurogi is in my group! Welcome! There weren’t many chances to talk after we came here!”

After dividing into group, the one who welcomed Kyousuke in an excessively loud voice was Saruwatari Futa, a hanuman ([wiki](#)).

What’s hanuman?, he thought and had asked Akira about it before, simply put, it seemed to be an India sacred beast that became one of the model for Son Goku. More accurately, Hanuman was an individual name, it seemed to be classified as a species called Vanara, but one of the most famous among them, that is to say, ‘*Hanuman*’ was often treated as one species in Japanese subculture.

And that was the nonsense Akira had told him in a bad mood. Akira in a bad mood was a common story, but that tone was mostly used when things related to special-effects was worsening his mood so Kyousuke decided to leave it alone. Surely Hanuman might have been put in a detestable role in one of his favorite special-effects programs. It wasn’t like Saruwatari had any sin in particular.

“I feel like there aren’t many chances to talk both after coming here and before in the former world though.”

“That’s true! Well, please treat me well!”

Saruwatari could take up the frontline and use magic, a rare position. Just that his defensive power wasn’t so high so you couldn’t expect him to work as a bulwark.

Incidentally, he was in the baseball club of Jindai high-school. He was the so-called ace pitcher, but since Jindai high-school baseball club was so feeble, when going to competition, they usually lost in the first round and went home. Even in the practice match just three months ago they were completely shutout by the girl pitcher of the opponent high-school and it became a famous story.

“Say, Saruwatari-kun...”

“Nn!?”

Sakuma timidly called out to him from behind. Not the one piece as usual but the succubus style with high exposure. It had become her combat uniform, but wouldn't a more defensive conscious outfit be better, Kyouusuke thought. Even against that kind of Sakuma he wasn't perturbed at all, but that was the man named Saruwatari. No, it didn't mean that he wasn't perturbed? His line of sight was turning away a little.

"What's wrong, Sakuma! Your voice is small as ever! If there's something you want to say, say it!"

"The group leader this time, is me but..."

"Really! That's true!"

Bringing out a big voice that made Kyouusuke unintentionally wanted to block his ears, Saruwatari nodded.

Sakuma as the group leader, adding the orc Okumura, the unicorn Hakuba, the hanuman Saruwatari, and then Kyouusuke made up the group this time. Bulwark role, magic attack role, adding the recovery role, it was relatively ideal composition. Hakuba's recovery magic had no effect to the undead but there was Saruwatari to recover Kyouusuke's injuries.

There seemed to be several types of recovery magic in this world. This was something discovered in Selena memo.

First was medical magic and sacred magic. There was no students in 2nd year class 4 who could use these magic that were developed in the human world. Conversely, there were magic that human couldn't handle such as life magic, spirit magic, shadow magic, etc., the recovery magic the students used were classified as these.

Among these, the one with fewest risk and highest versatility was life magic that manipulated vitality itself. However, that had no effect to undead which were moving under a principle different from original life force. Being told this was difficult for Kyouusuke as he had an awareness called '*I'm living*', but there was nothing he could do since the practical problem was that it had no effect. Recovery magic that could applied to undead as well were «*Aqua Heal*» of water attribute spirit magic, «*Shadow Heal*» of shadow magic, etc.

What Saruwatari could use was wind attribute spirit magic. It couldn't heal wounds but it was possible to perform dexterous feats such as fixing objects in

the air. If Kyousuke's bones were to cracked or something, they were going to cope with it using this.

"I feel like it will be faster to put me to Nekomiya group who could use shadow magic though."

"Well, that couldn't be help debu. There's the thing called party balance, debu?"

Okumura crossed his arms and said something plausible. Next to him, Hakuba was tilting his head.

"This group, is well-balance?"

"Yulong."

"Hah?"

"Hakuba is Yulong. I am Hakkai, Saruwatari is Goku, Saa-chan is Sanzou. Perfect debu?"

"Wait a minute. Does that make me Sa Gojou?"

Kyousuke reflexively retorted. What Okumura was talking about was the story *Journey to the West*. Party leader Genjou Sanzou was Sakuma, the riding horse Yulong being Hakuba was, well, understandable, the orc being Cho Hakkai, the hanuman being Son Goku was certainly acceptable, but why the remaining Kyousuke was Sa Gojou, it wasn't convincing. If that's the case, then Uozumi older brother who was presently working in the heavy cruiser branch school was much more Sa Gojou.

But Sakuma, who had remained silent so far, smilingly said this:

"But Utsurogi-kun, the skull Gojou wears around his neck was certainly those of the previous Genjou, right?"

"I know. Why is Sakuma saying that so happily?"

Certainly Kyousuke was exposing his skull, but it didn't mean he wore it around his neck in particular. It was troubling even if he was told «*It's Genjou's skull*» along with that smile.

No well, there was no problem though. It wasn't as if they were going to India after this, and it's not like Kyousuke didn't have the uselessly cool backbone of Sa Gojou so there was no problem. Incidentally, there was a theory that Sa Gojou being a water ghost was a mistake, but that was unmistakably irrelevant.

“First of all, Okumura-kun is the vanguard, Saruwatari-kun is the middle guard, I’m the rear guard. While moving, take a single column, Saruwatari-kun, be most vigilance of the back.”

Sakuma, while confirming the memo in hands, fluently said. Come to think of it, it was the first time Kyouusuke was incorporated into her group. He had heard the story, but when actually seeing her splendidly taking command like this, frankly, he couldn’t suppress his surprise. Even her countenance looked so gallant.

“Utsurogi-kun is on Hakuba-kun’s back.”

“Eh!? Why!? Saa-chan isn’t riding!? You’re monk Sanzou!?”

Hakuba shouted with all his heart while drifting a tragic feeling.

“Since the uncombined Utsurogi-kun isn’t good at running.... If think about using the effects of «*Characteristics Amplification*», that’s the best choice.”

It was a rational plan, but Kyouusuke also felt a little bit awkward somehow that he alone was riding in comfort.

“If there’s any objecting opinion, I will hear it, but I think this is the most safe and reliable formation. Exploring cheerfully is also important, but the most important thing is to make sure no none die. For that reason, amplifying Hakuba-kun’s life magic is the best. Are you okay with this?”

“”Yes, ma’am.””

Being told that so clearly, both Kyouusuke and Hakuba had no choice but nod. The hotblooded baseball idiot Saruwatari was crossing his arms and saying «*Youth is nice*» and such. Kyouusuke couldn’t understand where were the youth elements in this conversation, but if said by that man, 80% of the world population would be in their youth.

Kyouusuke straddled on Hakuba’s saddle that had completely matched him. He didn’t know if the effects of «*Characteristics Amplification*» could be invoked over the saddle or not, but well, if push come to shove, he could just grab Hakuba’s neck.

“Good grief.... Utsurogi seems grateful, but why I got stuck with letting a man ride!”

“I appreciate it Hakuba. By the way, I suddenly become curious, but is there also

virgin judgement to men as well?”

“I don’t know. Maybe there is, but if that’s the case, pretty much every men in this class is virgin.”

Somehow it felt like Sakuma was straining her ears to listen, but Kyouzuke decided not to worry about it.

“Ryuzaki, is there a reason why you make Kyouzuke have independent action from us?”

“Nn?”

During the renovation work of the heavy cruiser branch school, Ryuzaki was asked such a thing by Akira.

Akira was currently raising his body temperature to melt materials. If asked if this was his Phase 2 ability it didn’t seem so. Hino Akira had yet to reach Phase 2 was Akai Asuka’s opinion. Akira originally had enough potential to put out firepower of close to 1000 degree, he just didn’t try to show it to others. The fact that Akira, who didn’t readily open his heart to anyone beside Utsurogi Kyouzuke, was cooperating so easily like this would be because he started to proactively come in contact with them.

“I understand that both I and Himemizu have work to do, but it should have been okay not to put Kyouzuke in the exploration team. So I’m asking what idea do you have.”

“Well, simply put, I’m feeling for a new trend.”

Answered Ryuzaki as he gazed at the work schedule Kuremori the Gremlin handled over.

“Because we’re going to cross the ocean after this, It will be difficult for Hino to move. Naturally, the pattern of Utsurogi and Rin combing will increase, I think, so while there’s still time, it will be better to try thinking of a different movement method.”

“I also agree with that way of thinking. Is this area safe?”

“According to Asuka, Knights and Bishops only have 2 each. They will be refilling the vacancy, but there’s no blood clan remaining in this area. Therefore, I want to let him get accustomed to independent action at once.”

Utsurogi Kyouzuke in the uncombined status was exceedingly weak. Akira and

Rin could play a different role in this way even if they were in a separated state like him, but Kyouusuke was completely a *‘combat member after combine’*. Presently, if remove Akai Asuka, he was the only one who could oppose the Knight class bloodkins, so Ryuzaki didn’t plan to make light of his existence. However, he should consider the possibility of Rin and Akira becoming unable to move from now on. In that case, it would be necessary to have Kyouusuke walking about independently and thinking for himself. Of course, even if it was called independently, the premise was to join a common front with other classmates.

Ryuzaki himself had also experienced the effects of Kyouusuke’s Phase 2 ability *«Characteristics Amplification»*. When battling the Pawn in the western fortress line of the Knight Kingdom, Ryuzaki was able to spread his wings and fly in spite of the clearly excessive weight. That was probably the result of Kyouusuke’s Phase 2 ability had applied to himself as well.

Kaminari Totoha also said that she was able to fly faster than usual when she was carrying Kyouusuke in the Extreme Cross state. When thinking about the simple spec-up effect, there would be various ways to use Kyouusuke’s power.

“Ryuzaki, can I have a minute—.”

Gofunkawahara, accompanied by the goblin group, came along.

“It seems we’re going to land the heavy cruiser branch school on water after this, and start interior work. After that is dismantling the caterpillar unit from outside.”

“Understood. Please advance the dismantling centered on Uozumi as planned.”

“That’s fine, but what do we do about the removed caterpillar unit? Kuremori said that because we can’t obtain material beyond this point on as expected, the same thing can’t be made.”

The present heavy cruiser branch school was a heavy cruiser fixed to make it usable, a caterpillar unit was installed on the ship’s bottom, that was then linked with the engine. They were able to procure everything such as the engine and materials in the dungeon. It was a more than perfect story, but no wonder, because that dungeon itself was originally prepared to moderately confuse the 2nd year class 4, moderately disturb their unity, and then moderately unify them. Materials and magic reactor, etc., that looked usable

were abandoned in large quantity in the lower part, seemed to have been things the blood clan bunch left behind on purpose.

Well, as expected, they didn't seem to think that the students would make this big a land warship though.

In any case, they were going to dismantle the caterpillar unit after this. The caterpillar unit was too heavy to stabilize the hull, so naturally, they wouldn't be able to cross the sea with it attached. It was impossible to put it on the ship and carry it as well. Sinking and making it a fish reef would be best, but they would have no choice but to abandon the branch school after crossing the sea in that case.

"There's nothing to be done if we can't carry it. Let's leave it be hind."

"Oui oui. I will inform Kuremori."

"But there's the kitchen, the home garden, and then Washio's altar. So even if we abandon the branch school, I want to do something about those..."

It was then when Ryuzaki was muttering such a thing.

"Gyowa--!!"

A scream was heard from the direction of the sea, so he moved his gaze over there.

"It's Rin's voice."

"Apparently, the filtration has failed."

While melting iron with high heat as ever, Akira said in a cool tone.

He was thinking to have Rin use her ability to filter seawater and make salt. If fresh water, they could make it with spirit magic, but with Kogane gone, that burden was concentrating on water attribute magic users such as Uozumi Masuyo. If Rin could filter seawater, it would be best, he thought but....

"Impossible impossible impossible impossible--! Salty! So salty my body's moisture will come out because of osmotic pressure! It's hopeless for me! I can't be one with the ocean!"

When looking, there was a masterful slime faithfully spouting out fresh water and salt separately while shouting so.

“While saying impossible, it doesn’t seem like you can’t do it.”

Akira said unfeeling words. Ryuzaki as well, floated a bitter smile and nodded.

“However, changing to water storage mode seems unlikely.”

This led to the reality that not only Akira but even Rin’s movement would be greatly restricted when fighting on the sea. As expected, crossing the sea seemed to be accompanied by many hardships.

“Fueeeen, painful salty–...”

“There there, you’ve tried your best. Surarin.”

Rin had become dejected, Sugiura Aya the scylla was comforting her.

“(I have to apologize to Rin later...)”

After thinking that much, Ryuzaki got back to work again.

“Uh-huh, in other words, the continent is under the domination of a big country called the Empire, and you guys are that place’s merchants.”

“How should I put it, *that place’s*, is still a little misleading. The continent is roughly divided into 5 commerce guild, the ones that are treated as the ‘*Empire’s merchants*’ are only those who belong to the Center Guild.”

“What your caravan belongs to is? The Southern Guild?”

“Continental Southern Commerce Guild. Among the 5 commerce guild, it’s the one that comes and goes between the most number of countries.”

He received a simple lecture about this world from Remy, the young merchant of the maritime caravan. The place was a under the shade of a tree a little away from the beach. Voice of men working to repair the sailing ship mixed with the sound of waves washing ashore reached until here.

It was then that Okama Kaoru finally grasped how grand a scale this world was and around where he was; as well as how far a distance he might have moved in the past two months.

“(I am a relatively good walker...)”

While looking at the map, Kaoru admired himself by himself.

That Kaoru was being fixedly staring at by Remy. Remy was a youthful girl with light brown skin. Kaoru had went around greeting the survivors of the caravan, but she was far younger among them. Saying it better, she was childish? Probably more youthful than their actual age.

Besides, her ears were pointed. This was the same feature as Kogane. *Is she also an elf?* However, the elven country she had shown him on the map was in the northeastern part of the continent, far, far apart from the southern part of the continent where she was active.

“Say, Kaoru-san.”

“What?”

As Remy timidly started speaking, Kaoru smiled sweetly.

“Kaoru-san, are you a man? Are you a woman?”

“Ara, asking such an awkward thing so smoothly, you. You said oniisan at the beginning, didn’t you? It’s fine with that then.”

“But...”

“No but no duck either. [A pun] I too, really wanted to be a cute girl. But you know my name, right? Okama Kaoru. Reading backward it will be Ruokamakao. Either way is still Okama, isn't it? No matter how hard I try, I'm still Okama in the end. Well, even standing normally I'm still Okama though.”

As the story rattled on and on, Remy nodded every now and then, a little animal-like child.

Well, as the story he had said, no matter how much he dressed up and be pretty, he himself was a man in the end. That, he had no choice but to live while aware of it. Like how it was with Goubayashi Genshuu, Kaoru had also faced down his guise and was able to feel a little more easier as a result.

Goubayashi. Is he safe now? He became a decoy to let me escape from Red Wing's surprise attack. I think there's no way that man could die so easily, however, the power of that red winged devil was overwhelming.

“Ohh, Okama-dono, you were over here.”

A mustached old man show himself under the shade where the two were. He was the leader of the maritime caravan Remy belonged to. Certainly his name was Welkano. Similar to Remy, his skin tanned light brown. Whether it was due to age, his muscles were bad and he looked unreliable, but scars could be seen throughout his body. *He must have been an excellent man in his younger years*, Kaoru thought.

“Thanks to you, the caravan was protected from the sahagins' attack somehow. The ship's repair will be finished in a few days, so how about it? If you don't mind, with us...”

“Like I said previously. I, am waiting for my companion.”

They said they was going to head toward the Maritime United Nations Albadanba after fixing the ship.

Whether it was Albadanba or Albatross, he didn't know, but as expected Kaoru didn't have any obligation to accompany them that far. He had to wait for Goubayashi around here.

What if Goubayashi won't come? He tried not to think about such things too much. He tried not to think, but supposing that time actually came, he would

have no choice but to live care-freely around here with the imps he befriended using the power of «*Charm*».

Suddenly, Kaoru thought of something and raised her face.

“Welkano-san. There’s something I want to ask, is it okay, I wonder?”

“What is it?”

“Do you know about the devil growing red wings, cladded in black armor? We call him Red Wing but,”

When Kaoru inquired so, Welkano narrowed his eyes slightly.

“We don’t know the full story, but it matches with the devil in the information appearing everywhere in the continent. I hear they call themselves Red Moon.”

“Ara, so that’s the case.”

I got a clue more easily than I thought. Kaoru felt anticlimactic.

Red Moon, is it? That bunch obviously know about myself and Goubayashi. That’s not all. Those guys were trying to catch us. This is unmistakably an important clue to know what has happened to our body.

The classmates remaining the base may have noticed their existence as well, they may even started moving already.

In order to ascertain that as well, I want to link up with Goubayashi and the others. As Kaoru was think so, in his ears reached the screams of the caravan’s members.

“The sahagins came—!!”

“Ara ara.”

Narrowing his eyes, Kaoru stood up. Remy and Welkano’s expression tightened by the tension.

“Those fishes-san haven’t learn their lesson. I’ll be going for a bit.”

“Be—Be careful.”

There was nothing that seemed necessary to be careful of though. He had already roughly understood the ability of those sahagins. They weren’t opponents that would be so hard to fight if he commanded the imps and battled. Just that her feelings alone made him happy, so Kaoru, with a smile,

left with the words «*thank you*».

“Ah, that’s right Remy.”

“Ye—yes?”

Just before heading toward the beach, Kaoru looked back.

“Since you’re a merchant, pay a bit more attention to your appearance. Those clothes is a little, out of fashion, yeah?”

“Eh, eehhh!?”

It was something he had always thought of saying since the time they met. Those clothes were completely like a jute bag.

“Fashion check is my hobby. You mustn’t forget that girls always have this feeling of ‘*we’re onstage*’, don’t you think?”

“Ye—yes...”

“Well then—. Let’s discuss again once I finish cleaning up fishes-san.”

Saying as much as what he wanted to say, Okama Kaoru started running in the direction of the beach.

Around the time when 1 or 2 hours had passed since the start of the search. Quite a distance away from the anchored point of the heavy cruiser branch school, Kyouzuke and the others were slowly going northward along the coast. Only, it wasn’t just the beach continued on forever, sometimes there were areas difficult to traverse such as rocky places, etc., so they were surprisingly delayed. However, there wasn’t any appearance of any kind of monsters at all. Going too far north and they would bump into the country of the so-called fire people who followed Volcanic faith or Dragon King faith. They who had a severe and exclusive nature, seemed to have been prevented from invading to the Empire in the form of being checked by Selena’s homeland, the Knight Kingdom and the Dragon Knight Kingdom situated northeast of it.

“If it’s the Dragon King faith, won’t we manage something if we bring Ryuzaki along?”

While walking along the beach, Kyouzuke was making such idle chitchat.

“How about it? I had also read the memo, but,”

Sakuma smile in a little troubled manner.

“Certainly there are many who believe the Dragon King faith of the fire people is connected to dragonewts, so we may be welcomed. But it seems that the dragonewts living in the volcanic belt around there was said to be direct descendants of the Dragon King and had amazingly high pride.”

“Saa-chan is well-informed.”

Still had his reins held by Kyousuke, Hakuba said in admiration.

“Between the Flying Dragon mountain range and Volcanic mountain range was the highest mountain called «*Crown of the Supreme Dragon*». They say that at its peak are dragonewts who are called the continent strongest, and those guys continued to fist fight days and nights.”

“So fantasy.”

“Ne~. It’s thrilling, isn’t it?”

They were called the continent strongest, so as expected, they should be strong enough so that the present Ryuzaki would powerless against them.

“So what you means is *that*. Class rep will soon feel the limit of his strength and go there for training or something.... There may be that kind of patterns!”

Saruwatari who was vigilant of the surroundings at the end of the line, heatedly shouted.

“Apprenticing to a dragonewt who was called the continent strongest.... That may happen! Get fire up! It’s youth!”

“Well, the direction we’re heading for after this is the exact opposite from that Crown of the Supreme Dragon though.”

Kyousuke muttered while recalling the map in his head. Saruwatari blatantly made a dispirited face.

Well, anyway, even if we pass through the country of fire people, we can’t proceed any further. Once passing through the country of fire people, there were the Dragon Knight Kingdom and Southern Kingdom in the coastlands, these two were countries where the influence of the Empire were especially strong. Furthermore, they had to cross over the canal to advance further to the east from the Southern Kingdom. If they tried to bypass the canal, they would

tread upon the Empire territory. Land route was impossible.

“But still, well, I miss human.”

Was it because Kyouzuke said so without any particular reason. Hakuba stopped his legs and looked at Kyouzuke riding on the saddle.

“Wh—what, Hakuba...”

“No.... I think it’s unusual for you to say such a thing.... Well, I certainly do miss human.”

In the life on the heavy cruiser branch school Ryuzaki directed, they were behaving quite human-like. But saying that they were advancing while purposely avoiding human living area in this way, was a little lonely. In fact, you could say that they had feelings such as wanting to experience various cultures of various countries in this world.

“There’s no helping it. We are humans, yet we are monsters.”

“Well—, that’s right. Saa-chan. Well, the Knight Country was good as expected.... Selena-san is cute...”

Hakuba ecstatically let his eyes swim in the air. **Pechi pechi**, Kyouzuke was patting his forehead but he didn’t really return.

“Perhaps, we may meet humans surprisingly quick debu.”

Okumura who was walking in the lead, broke his silence so far and said that.

“What do you mean? Okumura.”

“I see an anchored sailing ship in a place some distance ahead debu.”

Saying so, Okumura peered into the telescope. It was the telescope he previously found when exploring the heavy cruiser that was crumbling away in the wasteland. The lens had cracks in it, but Okumura was pleased and frequently used it.

Hearing that, Hakuba and Saruwatari hopped up and down.

“Is it true, Okumura!?”

“It’s cultural exchange again! I’m looking forward to it!”

On the other hand, Sakuma was making a grim expression. Kyouzuke as well, he couldn’t make any expression but he was similarly pondering.

According to the map, this area was slightly out of the human living are. Possibly, it was a ship that met a disaster in the middle of a voyage and was washed ashore to this neighborhood. Since the fire people didn't have navigation technology, they would be humans of the Empire, or else humans of the Maritime United Nations.

As if to support this speculation, Okumura said:

"The mast is broken debu. Other than that ... well, the ship is considerably damaged. What do we do debu?"

The question at the end was intended for Sakuma the group leader.

"You better hurry up debu. There's this '*being attacked by monster*'-ish atmosphere debu."

Taken aback by those words, Sakuma raised her face.

Humans are being attack by monsters. Then we have to help them. What instantly floated in Sakuma's mind was probably this simple. Not that Kyousuke could say this and that about people, but he didn't particularly think it was excessive sense of justice. At least this side had way higher combat ability than human.

The reason for her hesitation was that they couldn't grasp those humans' origin at all. If those guys were humans of the Empire, it might get rather complicated. Could they make this decision on the spot in that case? Sakuma was wavering because of such a reason.

"Sakuma."

Kyousuke called out.

"I want to go help. However, the group leader is Sakuma, so you decide, Sakuma."

"Utsurogi-kun..."

Sakuma raised her face and looked at Kyousuke, then Hakuba, Saruwatari, and finally moved her gaze toward Okumura.

"If you need a just cause, then you can just talk about things such as demanding gratitude and have them help with the voyage."

"Yeah.... You're right."

Even assuming the other party was humans of the Empire, if they were actually shipwrecked, then they would be in an isolated and helpless situation. There was no need to think so hard. Of course, Sakuma wasn't suited to negotiation, so when it actually came to demanding gratitude, she would have to bring along Ryuzaki or someone else later though.

Anyway, said Sakuma.

"We're going to help the crews of the sailing ship after this."

Ooohh, Kyouusuke and the others raised their voice.

Chapter 45 — Okama and the Maritime Caravan

“Uwaa, lots—!?”

When they reached the target beach, what leaked out from Kyousuke before anything else was that shout.

The sandy beach was completely filled up, was a little exaggerating to say, but there was indeed a large flock of innumerable fishmen gathering there.

Yes, those were fishmen. Fish-faced warriors having red scales, donning simple armor, in their hands poised a pronged weapon. Even looking at the sailing ship anchoring a little offshore you could see those guys climbing up.

“As expected, Sa Gojou being Uozumi older brother is better, isn’t it...?”

Kyousuke muttered such a thing for some reason, but Sakuma put her hand on her chin and looked serious.

“But, Uozumi-kun looks different.... They maybe different fishmen.”

“Different? Like white people and black people?”

“Maybe, maybe like gorilla and chimpanzee, or Shiba Inu and Siberian Husky.”

Their looks were atrocious. Both eyes were properly directed in front, if pushed to say, it would be close to human. It was a facial structure specialized for stereopsis. On the other hand, Uozumi’s face was that of a fish itself, with eyes attached to left and right. His face seemed like a mackerel or sardine, it was idiotic somewhere yet had had a certain charm.

So saying they were different species certainly was convincing. It was a delicate point whether or not they could come to mutual understanding. It would be best if they could bring Uozumi along and settle it peacefully, but anyway, they couldn’t afford to turn back now.

Fishmen were advancing on the beach in great number, and humans who seemed to be the ship’s crew were escaping from those. One of the men fell down on the sandy beach, the fishmen holding pronged weapons swarmed around that man.

“Hi, hii!”

“Saruwatari-kun!”

When the man screamed, Sakuma called the name of the hanuman who was the fastest in the party.

“I’ve been waiting with tears in my eyes!” [Note]

No sooner than he said that, Saruwatari Futa charged at the sahagin flock with speed as though his body had become wind itself. The iron pole he brought out as his favorite weapon couldn’t extend like Son Goku’s Power Pole, but he used it to catch the fishmen’s pronged weapon and as it was forced them back.

“Youth home run!!”

Beaten by the stick swung with all his strength, the fishmen were blown away.

“Go on, you! Leave this to us and escape!”

Saruwatari held aloft his stick like a batter standing in the batter’s box, and shouted. *That’s not how you should hold that weapon*, Kyousuke retorted in his mind.

The man who was saved, was bewildered by the strange behavior of the monkey-type monster that had suddenly appeared in front of him, still, he nodded and started running.

“Ahh, please wait! There’s something important I forgot to ask!”

“...?”

“What’s your favorite baseball team?”

“Is this the place to ask that, idiot!!”

Hakuba’s foul jeers flew at Saruwatari. In the meantime, the approaching fishmen were blown away by Sakuma magic and Okumura’s sumo face-slap.

“Since you don’t need to answer, please escape quick!”

Hearing Sakuma’s words, the man started running again.

“Don’t do that again, Saruwatari...”

“You say that, but Utsurogi! It’s very important. Because I like Carp, the Uncrowned Queen favors Chuunichi?”

“Saruwatari, in this world, Central League, doesn’t, exist.”

The obvious thing was carefully simplified and explained. Of course, Pacific League also didn't exist.

The one called Uncrowned Queen seemed to be the remarkable girl pitcher who completely shutout Jindai High-school in the practice match. She cornered all the veteran batters of the opponent school to strikeout one after another, but she was a Queen, therefore she couldn't participate in the official game, hence '*Uncrowned Queen*'. It was exceedingly inconsequential. Amazing yet inconsequential.

"I'm not interested in baseball debu. Haa, it's regrettable that I couldn't see the final day of the (sumo) autumn tournament with my own eyes debu..."

"Since time flow is different, if we hurriedly return you may still be in time for Kyushu tournament."

"I will try my best with that as encouragement debu."

As yet to abandon his former nickname of «*Akai Chankonabe*», the student sumo wrestler of legend heavily stomped his feet and glared at the fishmen flock.

By the way, Kyousuke wasn't too interested in sports, so he was weak in these kind of topics. Sakuma was the same. As for Hakuba, he seemed exceedingly interested in talking about football league of Italy or Spain, but they couldn't keep talking care-freely like this as expected.

The fishmen's hostility was directed at them. Some were chasing after the human fleeing the beach, but that was obstructed by Sakuma's magic.

"FUOOO—! DOSUKOooo!!!"

Okumura's face slaps flattened the crowding fishmen. Pronged weapon thrust out and stabbed his body, yet he didn't appear to care about it at all. Okumura pulled out the pronged weapon stabbed in his body and threw it on the ground, putting both fists on the ground, he again glared at the fishmen. Leaping over that back, Saruwatari swung his stick and swooped down.

"Endure!!"

The stick struck, sands danced in the air. Furthermore, the wind attribute magic Saruwatari chanted and had on standby on his right hand, was activated toward the fishmen.

“«*Wind Cutter*»”

While rolling up the dancing sands, wind blade tore up the fishmen’s scales.

“«*Healing Light*»”

Hakuba’s horn glittered, light of life attribute magic healed Okumura’s stab wounds. Okumura, his wounds healed, slapped his stomach, then picked up one of the pronged weapon fallen on the ground and threw it to Kyousuke.

“Uoops...”

“You should use that guy debu, Utsurogi!”

“Understood.”

A little long to swing on horseback but there was nothing to criticize as a weapon. Kyousuke set up the pronged weapon, and regripped Hakuba’s reins.

“Horseback, reins and what not, don’t treat me like a horse so blatantly!”

“Oops, my thought was leaked...?”

“Oi what’s this. Utsurogi’s feelings are subtly being transmitted, gross.”

It was the same function as when he combined with Rin or Akira. So this meant the effect of Characteristics Amplification also applied to Hakuba. Hakuba’s life attribute magic had zero effect on Kyousuke though, so it felt like it wasn’t too excellent a combination.

“Kyaa...!”

Sakuma’s scream. She was ambushed by the fishmen lurking in the thickets. Noticing that, Hakuba immediately changed his course, he brandished his sharp horn at one of the fishmen attacking Sakuma. The unicorn’s horn, which was said to stab to death even an elephant in one thrust, started by skewering one fishman.

The fishmen who surprise attacked Sakuma counted 3. Kyousuke struck the pronged weapon at 1 of the 2 remaining ones; struck by the momentum of the horse, that fishman easily collapsed on the sandy beach.

“Deyaaa—!!”

Kyousuke stabbed the pronged weapon at the last one, but its scales were too sturdy for his feeble strength to go through. It did, however, faltered, Sakuma

made use of that gap to release magic.

“«*Evil Flare*»”

Black flame winding, roasted the fishman.

“Utsurogi-kun, Hakuba-kun, thank you!”

“Enough about thanks! Saa-chan, please pull out the fishman pierced on my horn! Utsurogi maybe fine but! Shit, who the heck said that unicorn can kill elephant in one thrust! Please properly write how to pull the horn out after killing!”

While beating the fishman body caught on his head with his fore-hooves, Hakuba screamed. Kyousuke used the trident to push the fishman corpse, removing it. Blood was sticking all over, but when the horn shined for a moment, everything was beautifully purified.

In front, Okumura and Saruwatari were rampaging in a peerless manner, yet the number of fishmen remaining was still too many. Kyousuke stabbed the trident on the sandy beach, then place his hand on Sakuma’s shoulder.

“Hyaa.”

“Oi what’s this Utsurogi, what’s this. So sneaky. Me too.”

Hakuba was trying to put his hoof on Sakuma’s body but there was no suitable place so he dejectedly hung his head.

“Sakuma, blow them away in one go with magic. «*Characteristics Amplification*» should also apply to Sakuma like this.”

“Eh, ah.... Y–yeah. Understood.”

«*Characteristics Amplification*»’s effect that was invoked with Rin and Akira, was certainly displayed with Hakuba as well. Supposing the condition was ‘*physical contact*’, then Sakuma’s magic should also greatly increased in power like this. Also, there was the precedence called Trinity Full Cross, so there was no way he couldn’t invoke its effect with two people at the same time. Sakuma’s battle costume was excessively lacking in cloth area, so naturally, her shoulder that Kyousuke was touching was bare. To not be thinking about strange things as much as possible, Kyousuke averted his eyes, but this too only put her bare shoulder blade into his view, it was bad either way. What inconvenient about the skeleton body was that he had no eyelids so shutting

out his sight was impossible.

“I’ll report to Himemizu.”

Murmured Hakuba.

Why did it become like that? The best thing to break through the current situation was to wipe out the enemy with Sakuma’s magic, therefore, applying buff to her was the natural choice, Kyouusuke thought.

“No, it’s not about reason, I just can’t stomach your position right now.”

No helping it then.

Sakuma cool shoulder was steadily heating up, but he decided not to worry about it anymore. The space in Kyouusuke’s heart wasn’t wide enough to worry about such things and still be able to walk about skillfully.

“Even though you’re empty...”

“It’s true...”

“Geezz! I—I’m chanting!?”

Sakuma raised her face and held both arms forward.

“Reduce all creation to ashes, claws of the Demon King burn the earth!”

The black magic that only Sakuma could use in the class at the moment, had short chant. Every single word she recited turned into power, bonded with Sakuma’s power and brought forth terrifying thermal energy. Hakuba shouted to Okumura and Saruwatari who were standing in front.

“Saa-chan cannon’s firing! Friendly tanks in the line of fire evacuate!!”

“Surprisingly, Hakuba seems to like this as well...”

The black flame generated in Sakuma’s arms were incomparable to so far. Whether they noticed it, Okumura and Saruwatari hurriedly ran to the side.

“«*Evil Flare*»!”

Thereupon, the same magic Sakuma had released until just now, displayed power on a completely different level.

The released mass of black flame divided, drawing a shape just like 5-forked claws, and ran through the air like that. Rolling up the red scaled fishmen who

were late to escape, the flaming claws exploded on top of the sand. The sands on the beach were strongly blown up, thunderous roar echoed. Shockwaves reached even this place. Kyousuke tightly gripped Hakuba's reins so as not to be blown away. Sakuma as well, was making sure to protect her face and leaned closer to him.

Amid the sands sprinkling down was smoke and burning smell. Naturally, traces that fishermen were there or the like couldn't be found anywhere.

"Quite considerable..."

Hakuba murmured. Kyousuke also nodded. Never had he thought that this much power would come out.

"Well, I'm surprised debu."

"Youth is explosion."

Okumura and Saruwatari peeked out from the shadow of a rock. Even Sakuma who fired that magic herself was making a flabbergasted expression, seemingly the most surprised of all. Kyousuke made sure she closed her mouth so that sands wouldn't enter.

If Ryuzaki had incorporated Kyousuke into the exploration team alone was to explore for a new method to make use of «*Characteristics Amplification*», then it may have been a great success. Presently without Kogane, Sakuma was the strongest attack magic user in the class, nevertheless, he was able to increase her magic's offensive power this much just by touching. If it became naval battles where they couldn't fight at close quarters skillfully, then this way of use might be more useful.

"I mean, it's that,"

Hakuba murmured.

"Witnessing the different in magic power in this way, I can understand well what an amplification Himemizu and Hino got when combining with Utsurogi."

"You're right..."

Kyousuke also nodded. Combining with Rin and Akira could raised their ability to fight continuously, but if using «*Characteristics Amplification*» on those with magic attack role such as Sakuma might be connected to raising firepower of a

single attack. In the meaning that he had become able to put such scuffle into hypothesis, the search this time could be said to be significant with only this much.

“That, that’s not right!”

Finally returning to herself, Sakuma raised her face.

“The people in the ship! Are they all right!?”

“I wonder about that. But as one would expect, the fishermen entering the ship seem to have seen the explosion just now and are escaping.”

Kyousuke looked at the sailing ship anchoring a little offshore. The appearance of the swarming red fishermen wasn’t there.

It was done quite flashily but it was a fact that they had rescued the humans in their crisis. If possible, he wanted to talk to their leader. Even better if they could build cooperation in crossing the sea in the future.

Kyousuke too, didn’t plan on straddling Hakuba’s saddle forever when the crisis had already passed. Using the trident as a staff, he descended on the sandy beach and look around the surrounding.

“Be careful, there’re survivors.”

Since Hakuba said so, Kyousuke gazed at the same direction. There he saw several individuals of the same type as the fishermen just now as they made rustling sound and came out. Okumura and Saruwatari took their stance, Sakuma took one step back and readied to use magic.

Whether they perceived this side’s preparation for battle, the fishermen, without escaping to the sea, set up their trident and glared. In the still as dead sandy beach, fishermen’s corpse strewn all over the place, the sound of waves violently breaking onto shore echoed.

If it’s just this number, we can instantly dispose of them. At the moment they thought that.

“Yes yes, sahagin-chans. Bullying children is not good—.”

The well-projected tenor voice drowned out the sound of the waves. Hearing that voice, the fishermen stopped moving and stood at attention.

I’ve heard this voice somewhere, the moment Kyousuke thought so, he saw that

Sakuma's complexion suddenly became bright. After looking at her face, «Ahh», he unintentionally raised his voice.

From the thicket where the fishmen called sahagin came out, an incubus showed himself.

A handsome man with stature close to 180 (cm). His supple and lean body was covered by a costume of unknown material with little cloth area similar to Sakuma's. Smooth blond hair swayed in the sea breeze. While a man, he was excessively suitable for model walking with arms crossed. From behind him came several imps. And then a young girl with light brown skin showed her face.

“Kaoru-chan!”

Sakuma shouted with a full faced smile.

“Yes, Sachi. You seem lively, don't you?”

That incubus floated an enchanting smile and responded.

It was an enchanting smile the incubus had, but there was absolutely no danger of swaying a woman's heart in there. If one had to say, then it was the 4 young men over here who felt uneasy whether or not that smile was directed at them. At the same time as feeling delighted by the reunion with a long separated classmate, they were feeling a little awed.

Having the greatest influence on the girls in the class, furthermore, being able to openly state his opinions against Queen Akai Asuka, a unique existence. Okama Kaoru. Nickname Kaoruko. In 2nd year class 4, this existence with the strongest character rivaling Harao Masaki, Big Sis Incubus had returned.

Apparently, Kaoruko had arrived at this coastline a few days ago, it was then that he was requested to guard the merchant ship, which was swallowed up in a storm and shipwrecked, until its prepare was over. Since he had a promise to meet up with Goubayashi anyway, so thinking *'I might as well'* and accepted it.

Continental Southern Commerce Guild. The brown skin girl who named herself as Remy said that as their affiliation. En route to the Maritime United Nations Albadanba, the maritime caravan met a disaster, she said. Even though Kaoruko was close to human, he was obviously a monster at a glance, yet asking him to be a guard was only a matter of fortitude, but despite standing in front of skeleton, orc, hanuman and what not, she didn't look fazed at all, this girl might have been surprisingly gutsy.

Only, speaking of whether the caravan members were the same as her, it didn't seem so. Kyousuke and the others did somehow drive away the fishmen called sahagin, but the many young merchants just stood at a distance watching them as they gathered and had a discussion on the sandy beach.

"No well, I'm sorry."

The maritime caravan leader Welkano-shi, supporting himself with a cane, walked toward them and suddenly apologized.

"The Southern Commerce Guild visits countries such as the Beast Kingdom or the Merman Country so we're relatively cool with other races but.... The ones who survived are mostly young merchants."

"Don't worry about it, president. Just being able to talk like this is plenty."

"Haahaaha, we're really saved by Okama-dono's generosity."

Okama-dono, the instant they heard that way of calling, everyone shrunk their neck.

Okama Kaoruko hated to death his family name. He had coerced the classmates to called him *'Kaoruko'* and would get extremely angry quite like hellfire whenever someone called him *'Okama'*. Not that there was no exception who was allowed to called him that way, but even in those cases, his face wasn't very pleasant.

But here, Kaoruko who was denounced as Okama, didn't particularly appear to mind it and was just polishing his nails.

“But, Kaoru-chan, I’m glad that you’re safe...”

“That’s my words. Sachi too, you seem to have become very resolute, aren’t you?”

The handsome man incubus, the beauty succubus. Seeing them rejoicing in each other’s safety in this way, only looked as if they were dream demon siblings, but that might be something close to the truth. Kyousuke had also heard about how the two of them got along since primary school days. By the way, there was also talk about how Sakuma was under impression that Kaoru was a girl until 4th grade.

“By the way, Kaoruko.”

Hakuba was swiveling his head around.

“What are those imps and sahagins, Your menservants?”

“That way of talking, I don’t like it. I wonder what should I say? Well, I can’t deny that I used «*Evil Eye of Fascination*».”

“«*Evil Eye of Fascination*»?”

Sakuma inclined her head.

“I called it that but.... Well, there may be other proper name. So like this, if I stare at the other party.... I can make them listen. The effect is temporary, so I have to educate them during that time though.... Sachi, you can’t use it?”

Furufuru, Sakuma shook her head.

Probably a kind of brainwashing ability. Certainly, it could be said as a naturally usable ability for a dream demon. Was this a racial ability, or was it something extended by Phase 2, Kyousuke didn’t know. Judging by appearance, there were both males and females among the imps, so when thinking that Kaoru was able to charm the other party by crossing over species and gender, it might be the later.

Only, the fact that Sakuma, a succubus, couldn’t use any succubus-like ability so far, was a bothering Kyousuke. If speaking of whether they wanted her to actively use it, the consensus of the boys in the class was that, *‘I don’t really want her to use it’*.

Possibly, Sakuma still hasn’t come to terms with her inner face that was

reincarnated as a succubus, has she? Kyousuke was thinking such a thing. Since she didn't want to admit that she was a succubus, she couldn't use any succubus' ability. It was a very simple story.

"Well—, anyway, I've been wanting to talk to everyone in the class for quite a while. Although I said so, I'm a guard right now so I can't move. Has Gen-chan returned?"

"He returned. We will bring him along. Akai and Ryuzaki too."

Kyousuke answered. Sakuma took over the conclusion of his words.

"This one month, various things have happened, various things we came to know so...."

Never was it mean to be only pleasant, that probably had transmitted to Kaoru as well. He warped his handsome face ever so slightly, said shortly «*really*», and nodded.

"That's right. There's something we want to discuss with Welkano-san."
"Fumu?"

Welkano-shi who was watching the trend of the story so far, incline his head while holding his cane.

"We are also planning to cross the sea after this."

Sakuma brought up the story.

"Fumu..."

"If possible, we want to go together, but..."

"It's fairly difficult matter."

When Welkano responded unfavorably, Kaoru surprisedly lifted his eyebrows.

"Strange. Didn't you say you want to request me to escort you until you cross the sea?"

"Certainly. But that was because it was just Okama-dono alone. We're calmly talking in this way, but a situation where skeleton, orc can speak human language and join forces beyond the species barrier was originally something abnormal for us."

A very reasonable thing they were told. When recalling the first time they met

Selena, she had looked at them, toppled over and fainted. Thinking about it now, Kyouusuke understood that the merchants gazing at this eerie gathering from a distance was a more normal reaction, and the cordial welcome they got at that Knight Kingdom was actually nothing other than good luck.

But precisely because of this that he still wanted to establish cooperation with these humans no matter what. For 2nd year class 4 who were all but monsters, sailing to the Maritime United Nations Albadanba was a dangerous act, even assuming that Albadanba wasn't under the Empire's influence.

"Of course, we too want escorts. There's no guarantee that you guys won't attack us and snatch away our merchandise, but well, such guarantee has already flow to the sea together with the escort adventurers."

What you called adventurers were mercenaries managed by the Adventurer Guild. He had read a little about it in the documents.

Apparently, this situation was that Welkano-shi felt grateful for this proposal but still turning a skeptical gaze at them. He was weighing between the risk of crossing the sea without any escort and the risk of employing an unknown monster corps as escorts.

Since he doesn't intend to completely rejected this, well, let us try to make some concession as well. But as expected, if we're to discuss anymore than this, we should bring along Ryuzaki or Akai, Kyouusuke thought and looked at Sakuma. Did Sakuma guessed Kyouusuke's idea? She looked over here and nodded.

The situation was already different from Selena's time. There would be obstacles to talk about their circumstances and everything they knew. Including those, it would be necessary for the representatives to negotiate as expected.

"Then, we will return to the ship once and bring along our representative."
"Representative,... If you could teach us what kind monster are they, we will be able to prepare mentally."

"Dragonewt. Dragonkin. Dragon-face species."

The fact that she had expressly say dragon-face species was because this world also had dragonewt species that had appearance close to that of human's. Kyouusuke still didn't read much of Selena's documents. He was made to realize his lack of study.

Welkano-shi closed his eyes slightly and nodded.

“Understood. I said this just now, but we too want escorts. Let’s pray that we can negotiate well with that dragonewt representative.”

“Thank you.”

Saying so, Sakuma stood up.

“Ah, Sachi, you’re going back?”

“Yeah.... I’m going to call Ryuzaki-kun and Asuka-chan.”

“Really. I’ll be waiting.”

Kaoru laughed, showing his white teeth.

Everyone in this place bowed to Welkano and Remy, then left behind this beach where their ship anchored. They still didn’t know what to do after this, but rather than thinking, it was better to bring back the bright news. The ones who felt relieved wasn’t just Kyousuke alone.

On the way back, Sakuma poked poked Kyousuke’s shoulder.

“Nee, Utsurogi-kun...”

“What’s the matter, Sakuma.”

“I also want a technique’s name...”

“Ha, yes?”

She must want to discuss about the maritime caravan, Kyousuke was thinking, so he unintentionally asked again in a stupid voice.

“Umm, when borrowing Utsurogi-kun’s power, and shoot that amazing magic.... That is, like Hino-kun or Himemizu-san.... A little, cooler...”

Seeing that her downcast face was turning red, she was probably shy. Kyousuke scratched his head.

“I don’t think there’s any problem about naming, but I don’t have any naming sense...”

“Then I have a suggestion.”

Hakuba who was walking a bit ahead, turned back only his neck and grinningly showed his teeth.

“How about Big Burst? It’s perfect for Saa-chan.”

“Big Burst?”

“Yes. If it’s «*Evil Flare*», then Evil Flare · Big Burst. If it’s «*Blow Ash*», then Blow Ash · Big Burst, going with that tune...”

“I see.... Maybe cool!”

Sakuma said so with a full face smile, but there was a part in Kyousuke that was a little unconvinced.

No, the part about giving a name was fine. Since it was easy to yell, trying it out and you could bring out quite some spirit. Saying something like «*There are many enemies so let’s mow them down with Big Burst*» might transmit better than saying «*Let’s strengthen magic with Characteristics Amplification*» so that was okay.

That was okay, but,

Kyousuke looked at Sakuma who was happily bouncing, then after glancing at a certain place that he usually made sure not to look too much, he timidly started to say:

“How about a bit more ... different?”

“Then XL Burst, Giga Burst...”

“No.... As before is fine, Big Burst.”

Was it fortunate that Sakuma hadn’t noticed the hidden meaning Hakuba secretly put in?

Chapter 46 — A Succubus' Homework

After nearly 2 hours of heading south along the coastline, they finally reached the heavy cruiser branch school, by that time, everyone was completely exhausted. As Sugiura was making seafood BBQ, they decided to gratefully partake. Her action of handling fishes and shellfishes were considerably expert. *Catching this much marine products, as expected, it must have been Uozumi siblings' efforts?* When asking so, Sugiura shook her head and said «*I caught them myself*». Speaking of weak, she was a scylla. Her lower half was that of an octopus and swimming seemed to have been her specialty.

Anyway, this was the fresh blessing of the sea. According to the field trip program, the schedule was to treat themselves to this kind of meal in the evening of the 4th day, but before they got the chance to, they were transferred to this world. Okumura, Saruwatari, etc., were greedily devouring everything.

Kyousuke was eating as well, but behind him was Rin, waiting vigilantly, aiming for the eat-and-drop food. Completely a scavenger. The shellfish passed through his throat, falling, and was caught before it touched the sand, when he beckoned Rin, she happily crawled toward him and started eating the shellfish.

“Hi, Himemizu-san...”

Sakuma had a cramped smile.

“Rin, what happened to your dignity as a human...”

“What? You want to say I’m like a dog?”

“No, rather a dog.... You’re a triangular sink tidy.”

“It’s been a very long time since I heard that!”

Well, if the person herself was happy then it was fine though.

“Or Saa-chan is going to eat it too? Kyousuke’s eat-and-drop?”

“Eh, I can!?”

“Sakuma, I feel like even you are becoming a triangular sink tidy, but...”

Despite saying so, Kyousuke, with the reason that she seemed to really want it, handed a fish that had passed through his throat to her.

Although Kyouzuke didn't have saliva, as expected, he still felt awkward about handing over something he had chewed to her. So he decided to assertively leave the one he wanted to enjoy the texture such as shrimps or shellfishes to Rin.

"The taste is a little thin."

"Ne—. It's mysterious. Is there something like soul in taste as well?"

While digesting a shrimp, Rin said. Hakuba was looking at that situation while pricking at a crab.

"What's this, this scene I don't know whether I should be envious or not..."

"It's youth."

"Spitting out things you ate and have girls eat it? The youth I wanted to see was more pure."

It was completely as if Kyouzuke was told his youth was filthy or something, but he had no particular technique to deny it.

"Everyone, thank you for the exploration."

At that dining table, Ryuzaki walked in, bringing along Akai and Goubayashi. He walked while holding a bundle of documents in one hand, nowadays, he had completely gotten used to his job.

"Ryuzaki, is the work in the heavy cruiser branch school going fine?"

"More or less. Kuremori and Shokuzura have mostly done with the interior. And then the sun will set in a little more than two hours, so we will continue the work tomorrow."

Once the repair of the interior was done, next would be to dismantle the caterpillar unit outside. As for this, the Uozumi siblings would dived into the sea and do it, but the sea at night was dark and insecure. So the work would concentrate during tomorrow's daytime, Ryuzaki was saying.

Goubayashi, same as ever, was crossing his arms and making a frowning face one couldn't understand what he was thinking about, but Akai, as expected, couldn't hide her irritation. Once in a while, her teeth would rattle.

"I have read Sakuma's report. Humans' caravan, fishermen called sahagin, and then Kaoruko."

Sakuma nodded.

“First thing first, let’s digress a little, there’s a description about fishermen in Selen-san’s memo. In this world, there are 3 kinds of fishermen, the ones who live in relatively shallow sea are merman and sahagin. Among them, the one with wild and aggressive nature is sahagin.”

Sometime ago, Welkano-shi the caravan leader had said these words: *‘Merman’s country’*.

Which means merman was a species of fishman who had build a friendly relationship with human. Sahagin was the opposite.

“Uozumi was a gillman, wasn’t he? Couldn’t he come to a mutual understanding with them?”

“I wonder about that. Gillman lives in the deep sea so research about them doesn’t seem to progress much. They were said to be a species directly descended from the *‘Sea King’* who ruled this sea long ago, sahagin and merman are collateral descendants, or rather, they’re species that the blood of the *‘Sea King’* has become thin.”

“Dragonewt is the same. Dragon-face species like Ryuzaki-kun is directly descended from the *‘Dragon King’* of old.”

Sakuma comprehended. Everyone else was also nodding.

‘### King’ were names that occasionally came out as they tried to deepen their knowledge concerning this world. If about Dragon King, Beast King, Life King, they were closely related to countries and cultures in the continent so they often heard of it, but *‘Sea King’*, they heard for the first time.

After hearing about it, they seemed to have been really amazing existences but now they were already no long in this world.

“The sea in this area is probably the sahagin’s turf. There’s a possibility this place will receive an attack too but.... Well, this means we better not stay here for long.”

“If it’s a related species, it may be all right to throw Uozumi at them once.”

Ryuzaki turned over a page of the documents.

“About Kaoruko, we need to explain the situation to that guy later. I want to entrust that to Asuka and Sakuma.”

Akai nodded with a grim face. The reason was probably not just simple annoyance.

Kogane was kidnapped, Washio died. Kaoru still didn't know that. And there was also the fact that the original cause was none other than Akai Asuka. Precisely because they were unwisely best friend that she would hesitate to talk about it.

"It's okay, Asuka-chan."

Sakuma, with a smile, addressed Akai.

"Since I will talk together as well. All right?"

"Yeah.... Thank you."

Only when she was told so by Sakuma that Akai stopped clattering her teeth and made a little smile.

Deeply moved by the pure friendship of fellow maidens, Hakuba, while shedding large drops of tear, started sobbing. Saruwatari, while pinning down his mouth and moistening his eyes, muttered «*It's youth...*». They were guys who seemed to be splendidly enjoying life.

"Then, Ryuzaki. What do we do about the caravan's matter debu?"

"I will go to talk with them directly after this."

Ryuzaki easily answered Okumura's question.

"I'm bringing along Asuka, Goubayashi, Sakuma, and then Nekomiya for recovery in case of emergency."

Nekomiya Miya's shadow magic that use the target's shadow as a resource could demonstrate its power most effectively in the time period after this. It was proper as a choice.

"Can I come too?"

"Kyouzuke-kun?"

Looking at Kyouzuke raising his hand, Rin raised a surprised voice.

"No problem in particular. What happened?"

"No, there's no deep meaning. Will Rin come too?"

"Err, no. I have special training to endure seawater here, so go without me."

What's special training to endure seawater?, Kyouusuke thought, but he didn't poke deeply and left it.

“Understood. Utsurogi is the Skeleton Staff Officer, so it is certainly better if you directly grasp the situation.”

“That nickname is still in effect...?”

With a smile, Ryuzaki said, Kyouusuke answered that while feeling complicated.

After that, everyone once again went to the beach where the caravan anchored. While many merchants were watching with quizzical look, Ryuzaki greeted Welkano-shi. Ryuzaki was still okay, but Goubayashi standing behind him while crossing his arms had an amazingly intimidating atmosphere.

That Welkano-shi was the one who managed the caravan, but the maritime caravan wasn't a one-man organization by him alone. He too, in these last few hours, should have talked with the young merchants and gathered their opinions, but looking at their behavior, the attitude of the other side might not be favorable.

What Ryuzaki was going to talk with Welkano-shi was, well, various. Mainly, it would be about the request to accompany the humans' caravan that was going to embark for Albadanba after this, but knowing they were merchants, the story didn't limited to just that. Transportation of the caterpillar unit that they had no choice but to discard at the moment, purchasing materials, etc., there were heaps of things Ryuzaki wanted to borrow their help for.

Besides, this would be a difficult request, but there was also the '*human's blood*' Akai wanted.

Once it became the stage of all-out negotiation, Ryuzaki decided to talk to Welkano-shi one-on-one. Kyousuke and the others who accompanied him had to leave their seat.

"Then during that time, Akai and Sakuma can talk to Kaoruko."

On the sandy beach, Goubayashi, arms still crossed, said so.

"I think it will be hard to talk when we or the other merchants are looking. You can leave clearing out the people to me."

Compared to the bigness of his body, he was a man who could make this kind of attentive consideration. Clearing out the people, or more precisely, if Goubayashi just crossed his arms and stood imposingly, ordinary humans would be too scared to approach, so well, he was the ideal candidate? Kyousuke and the others, immediately after returning to this beach, had talked to Welkano-shi, so Akai or Goubayashi had yet to talk to Kaoruko. He, while having the imps and sahangins he tamed using «*Evil Eye of Fascination*» watch

the surroundings, seem to be continuing to be vigilance as a guard himself.

“Yup, understood.... Thank you, Goubayashi-kun.”

Sakuma said so and nodded, then pulling Akai’s hand to go looking for Kaoru. These days, he often saw Sakuma was assertive with Akai. It wasn’t extreme enough to be called two-faced, but the scene where the originally introvert Sakuma Sachiko pulling the Class Queen and leaving was a little amusing to watch.

“Like I said just now, I’m going to stand watch so other merchants won’t approach while Sakuma is talking, but how about you two? Stand watch together?”

“I will refrain.”

Nekomiya the cait sith answered Goubayashi in a theatrical tone.

“Being next to you seem suffocating. Utsurogi?”

“Since I don’t have any particular purpose, being together with Goubayashi is also okay, but then,”

Kyousuke looked around the sandy beach.

The sahagin corpses that were made in the previous battle were beautifully cleaned up. The merchants were probably sleeping in the sailing ship; there was no facility that could accommodate humans. However, cargo-like things were gathered in one place, and the figure of a petite girl inspecting that was visible. A brown-skinned little girl. He saw her some time ago. It was a girl named Remy.

“Are you curious too? Just right, let’s go socialize a bit.”

Looking up at Kyousuke, Nekomiya Miya said.

“Curious?”

“This caravan’s lifestyle, how are the humans in this kind of fantasy world living and such. You can’t really get a chance to interview like this just by living normally.”

Speaking of which, when they were at the Knight Kingdom, Kyousuke did remember Nekomiya walking around here and there in the royal palace. *Because I’m in the drama club, wasn’t the reason.* She probably had a character

brimming with curiosity from the start.

“...Curiosity killed the cat.”

“Stop the kind of joke that I can’t laugh at. And so, Goubayashi, I and Utsurogi are taking a stroll around here.”

“Fumu, understood.”

Before Kyouzuke indicated his consent, Nekomiya had forcibly advanced the story. Well, since Kyouzuke had no particular reason to refuse, if said no problem, then it was no problem.

“You said so Nekomiya, but since the other side is wary of us, something like interview is impossible, isn’t it?”

While seeing off Goubayashi’s back, Kyouzuke said so. In his heart, he was thinking: *Looking from the side like this, all I can see is an ogre following behind two beauties, so it’s a considerably suspicious scene, isn’t it?*

“In that case, we can just look around on our own. Ahh, are you saying wary in a sense of socializing with me? As expected, I don’t have the bad taste to steal other people lover.”

“Well, I don’t particularly have any wary or conceit about that, but.... I like cat.”

Nekomiya Miya, she was a black cat wearing leather boots. When she was in a good mood, she would straighten her prided key tail and walked upright. Kyouzuke, he had been living a relatively narrow world even at school. By narrow world, that meant a world of only Kyouzuke, Akira and Kogane. He had talked to Sakuma in a space called the library sometimes as well, nevertheless, the humans necessary for his school life didn’t even reach 5 people.

Because Kyouzuke was like that, these past two months when he started having conversations with various classmates was a considerably surprising incident. What he talked and understood was that *«I’m not as shunned as I thought»*, but since delicately measuring the distance was too much for him, he was weak at conversing one-on-one with the types like Nekomiya.

A skeleton and a cait sith walked along the sandy beach, young merchants were warily watching them. Only, when they were trying to withdraw to the sailing ship before sunset, it might be more correct to describe it as hurriedly escaping.

“There are still humans remain and are working. There’s an extraordinary young girl as well.”

“Ahh, her name seems to be Remy. I heard she’s the first one Kaoruko met.”

Remy, documents in one hand, was checking the barrels and wooden boxes lining up on the sandy beach one by one. Every time Remy passed by, the men would exchange a few words with her and carry the wooden boxes and barrels to the sailing ship.

A brown-skinned girl. Age was about 13, 14. Ears bouncingly protruded. Appearance-wise, she looked like Kogane, but possibly, she too was an elf.

“Yo!”

Without being timid, Nekomiya greeted. A man who was about to talk to Remy was evidently startled and took distance.

As for Remy, she didn’t particularly appear to be frightened, and finished with only a slight bow.

“Working hard, aren’t you? What are you doing?”

“Cargo check.”

Remy said so, however, Kyouusuke felt that her impression was subtly different from when he saw her earlier. Just a few hours ago, she should have been wearing cloth like a tattered bag, but now she was just a little bit fashionable.

“(That’s Kaoruko’s sense, right?)”

Nekomiya said in a whisper.

“(That’s right, she may have eaten a *fashion check*)”

Fashion check was Kaoruko’s hobby. His favorite motto was «*We are on stage*», with that as a premise, he was especially strict toward girls. In short, «*Since you’re born a girl after much trouble, be more cute!*», he said. At first, he was thought to be creepy, but by the time two months had passed, Kaoruko completely became the class’s fashion leader.

Since there was no way they can get something like beautiful clothes in this uninhabited coast, so did they embezzle some of the merchandise or something else?

“...These clothes are from the abandoned cargoes, Kaoru-san said it's too wasteful.”

Apparently it was correct. Was she embarrassed by the unfamiliar clothes? Her voice was a little tense.

“There are abandoned cargoes? Wasteful, isn't it?”

“I think it's related to the current, but quite a lot cargoes from the other caravan ships that had sunk in the storm was washed ashore. What I'm doing is checking that. Which company the cargoes belong to, what do they contain? There are also cargoes of company that had been completely destroyed, so when you want something in that, it will be auctioned. Properly check it, and when we return, part of the sales will be paid to the guild, the rules too are complicated.”

“Indomitable commercial spirit.”

Even Kyouzuke had leaked an admired voice.

This maritime caravan seemed to be formed by multiple companies affiliated with the Continental Southern Commerce Guild. Remy, as a newcomer of Welkano Company, had accompanied the journey this time. And immediately, it was this, indeed, this could only be said as bad luck.

“And then, the sahagins everyone got rid off. Sahagin's tridents are popular in seaside towns as warding charms, scales are traded as material as well, so those are split equally to the remaining companies.”

Whether explaining was getting fun, a little natural gentleness was returning to her words. But then, Remy suddenly stopped speaking, and looked around to Kyouzuke group. Even before a skeleton and a cait sith, she didn't appear faltering all that much.

“The skeleton person there, you're the person who exterminated the sahagins some time ago, aren't you?”

“Ah, yeah.”

“I have one question. Why did you think about saving us?”

That was a question Kyouzuke was poor at. «*Isn't it natural to help people in need?*», somehow, he just couldn't say it by himself. Kyouzuke was hesitating on how to answer, but immediately afterward, he noticed that the answer itself

missed the mark.

“Certainly, sahaagin is brutal, difficult to come to understanding species. However, I don’t quite understand the reason why everyone attacks the sahaagins and not us. If we assume that this area is the sahaagins’ turf, the one who invade are definitely us.”

That’s certainly true. I didn’t notice it before she said it.

Kyousuke and the class were thinking of themselves as humans. Appearance might have changed, but heart was human. Recently, the students who said the standard unhuman joke «*Although we’re not humans*» was also decreasing. Well, not that there wasn’t a strange bunch like Rin, who took actions that humans absolutely couldn’t imitate yet insisting herself was human; having said that, the mentality of each of them was mostly no different from the time they were humans.

Only, to explain that in words, was extremely difficult, Kyousuke thought. He was also doubting whether it was okay to carelessly tell the absurd story that they were in fact tripper.

“Well, we think that where’s whose turf is trivial.”

Nekomiya spoke words that barely didn’t become a lie.

“Is that so? Kaoru-san is also the same, but every is too human so...”

“Then how about Remy? Your ears are pointed though?”

“Ahh, yes. That’s because I’m half elf. Only I don’t know who my parents are.”

Easily confessed a shocking truth.

“I was sold to a slave dealer in Zelga Gladiatorial Principality. In that place there was monster trading, and many individuals were trained to talk as well, so I wasn’t too surprised when seeing everyone.”

“You’ve live a considerably hard life.”

“Only, I feel that everyone’s way of thinking is clearly different from the monsters I saw there. Well, that’s all.”

Zelga Gladiatorial Principality was a country on the East side of the Grand Canal, opposite from Pirika Southern Kingdom. Because the North was protected by the rigorous summit of the Beast King mountain range, it was a

country where the domination of the Empire didn't directly reach. Backing by such a circumstances, it was also the sole country in the continent to approve of slave dealing.

More or less, the place didn't even touch the presently assumed traveling route, so he didn't think about it too deeply.

"Oi, Remy, come over here for a bit—!"

Thereabouts, Remy was called by other merchants in a loud voice.

"Ah, yes! I'll go immediately! Then, please excuse me for a bit."

Giving a little bow, Remy ran on the sandy beach. Being left behind, Nekomiya, while watching the wooden boxes Remy had been checking until just now, asked Kyouzuke.

"What do you think?"

"There's quite a lot of information, I don't know which of it you're asking about though?"

"Well, summarize that. What do you think?"

As he was told, Kyouzuke ponder.

"As expected, what's bothering me the most is that we look like an amazingly bizarre group judging by human's standard."

"Well, that's an obvious thing though. Selena said so as well, didn't she?"

While being monster, their mentality was still human, therefore a sense of incompatibility would definitely be born. When interacting with humans, he was forced to feel that. Even looking at the attitude of those merchants, themselves were still just *monsters*.

"Then, Nekomiya. What do you think?"

"Me? What I think? Hmm, that's right, isn't it?"

Nekomiya Miya, while swaying her key tail like a metronome, pondered in a theatrical gesture.

"She is half human, moreover not afraid of monsters, so if we ask, could she let Akai drink blood? That's my thought."

*That suggestion seems like a good idea, a **seemingly** good idea. No, this is*

definitely no good.

“Or rather, is the story of Akai starving for blood already that famous...”
“I think that not everyone knows. But the person herself didn’t plan to hide it so much, did she?”

She was talking jokingly, but the practical matter was that she was worry about Akai. In all appearance, this caravan had many humans, it would be best if they could offer their blood, but in an emotional sense, it would be difficult to request that.

“Akai won’t do anything like being unable to endure it and attacking humans, right?”

“That Queen? As expected, she’s not that uncouth.”

That Akai should be talking to Sakuma and Kaoruko right now. I hope she could take back her calm a little by conversing with her best friends.

“You seem healthy, Kaoru.”

“You too, Asuka.”

Words to confirm each other safety was fine with that much. Akai wasn’t the type to speak more than necessary, on that point, Kaoru was talkative, but he didn’t have the personality to continue speaking senseless things endlessly. After exchanging the minimum words necessary, neither of them said anything in particular, Sakuma too, didn’t intend to say anything unnecessary.

Rather than that, there were mountains of things they have to tell. Sakuma, exchanging looks with Akai, when Akai nodded, she started telling Kaoru one-by-one, in an orderly manner.

That Kogane was kidnapped. That they made contact with the human force for the first time, that they remodeled the heavy cruiser, making it a moving branch school.

That Washio had died.

That Akai was a vampire before the transference.

That the trip this time was plotted by Akai’s blood clan.

Kaoru, without cutting in midway, carefully listened to it in details, and then finally, he silently nodded.

“So, Kogane-kun, Washio-kun is...”

“Sorry. Talking in one go like this ... may be difficult to accept, however...”

“It’s okay, Sachi. You have held out well so far.”

Gently smiling, softly brushing Sakuma’s silver hair, immediately afterward, Kaoru turned his gaze to Akai.

Akai narrowed her eyes slightly. Arms crossed, she took a deep, deep breath, then unwrapping her arms, she slowly bowed to Kaoru.

“From me as well, I’m sorry. Kaoru. If possible, you and Sachi...”

“That sort of thing,”

Akai raised her face, on her lips pressed Kaoru’s index finger.

“Is not something you say at this timing. Asuka, unfashionable?”

“...Yeah.”

“Well, saying I don’t care about it would be lying. But this was also a good chance to confront myself. Besides, the target I should get angry at is not you. Isn’t that right?”

Okama Kaoru was this kind of man. There might be some problems in determining him as a man. But Sakuma, from the bottom of her heart, thought that she was glad to be Kaoru’s friend, that too was probably the same for Akai. Akai, after looking around as if she was worrying about the surroundings, suddenly breathe out.

“Haaa...!!”

“Asuka-chan?”

Confirming that there wasn’t anyone, Akai, as it was, sat down on the sandy beach. Needless to say, her clothes were a sailor uniform. Sand got on her skirt, but she didn’t appear to mind it.

“Steeling myself, I’m tired.... It’s stupid to keep up appearance in front of you two...”

“Araa? Walls have ears, sliding doors have eyes?”

“Pardon me for a bit now...”

Akai smiled bitterly.

Presently, Goubayashi was letting out fighting spirit at full throttle,

simultaneously performing clearing out people and vigilance, so actually, the possibility of this scene being seen could be said to be nil.

“Well, it’s an honor if you say you can only show this kind of appearance to us. But Asuka, your friends are not only the two of us, don’t forget that. There are your two followers as well.”

“Ahh, Harui and Hebetsuka...”

“Because those kids has been thinking of Asuka as friends from the bottom of their heart, they must be shock when you’re keeping a secret, so properly follow-up, okay?”

Kaoru’s words were gentle, but the things he was saying was strict. Certainly, after the case of Akai’s confession, Harui and Hebetsuka had become a just a little distant from her. Probably because everyone was species that was good at keeping up appearances, there was hardly any students who noticed that slight different.

Although it wasn’t something limited to just Harui and Hebetsuka, but what Sakuma had seen and been worrying about the most was, as expected, the slight ditch born between these two and Akai.

“Yeah, I will try my best...”

Akai, after hesitating a little, clearly nodded.

“Nn, that’s a good reply. And then Asuka, can I ask one more thing that’s been bothering me?”

“I’ll answer anything. What is it?”

“It lightly came out in the story. Phase 2, 3? Do I have that too?”

“Uh huh...”

Akai, sitting gym-class-style on the sandy beach, looked at Kaoru, and then looked at Sakuma.

“That’s right. Since it’s a good chance, let’s talk. As far as I heard the story, Kaoru has already awoken to Phase 2 ability.”

“Ah, was that the case?”

“In the first place, a dream demon’s Phase 2 ability has been concluded to there only be one on theory.”

Dream demon’s, the fact that she had expressively said this, was because

incubus and succubus were, as expected, the same species. In other words, that would also influence Sakuma's Phase 2 ability. So far, Sakuma Sachiko had read through various documents gathered in the class, but she mostly didn't look at the things about dream demons.

The reason, even she herself knew.

“«*Brainwashing Strengthening*», is it? The thing that strengthens overall ability of mental interference type. Kaoru being able to make allies with incubus ability «*Temptation*» regardless of genders and species was thanks to this.”

“Is that so? Then, Sachi's Phase 2 ability is this too?”

Yup, Akai nodded, then hesitating a little and continued:

“But Sachi originally has never used «*Temptation*» even once, so her homework is a stage before that...”

It didn't mean she was particularly angry. Neither was she astonished. Akai Asuka was just stating the fact indifferently.

But that stabbed deeply into Sakuma big chest.

Because she was a succubus, she should have been able to use the racial ability «*Temptation*». But Sakuma had never used that.

While everyone in the class was waking up to Phase 2 ability little by little.

Wherein, just herself didn't show any sign of becoming able to use Phase 2, in the first place, she didn't use the prerequisite ability even once.

“(Is it better, to use, it...)”

Ignoring Akai and Kaoru's conversation, Sakuma imagined a certain boy in her mind.

Chapter 47 — To Use, or Not to Use?

After finishing the negotiation with the dragonewt who gave his name as Ryuzaki, Welkano returned to the sailing ship. Him who returned was being pressed by the grim looking caravan survivors.

The maritime caravan which consisted of 8 vessels, now only had one remained. The survivors were mostly young merchants, hardly with any experience. They, gazing at Welkano, unanimously asked.

“Captain, how did it go?”

“Did you really accept that bunch’s offer?”

Welkano, cane in hands, silently nodded.

That bunch, naturally, was the Monster Corps that dragonewt was leading. The incubus who had stayed with this caravan for a little while, undertaking the guard duty against the sahagins, seemed to have been one of that Corps as well.

Welkano, as the president of the Welkano Company had wandered between various countries south of the continent. The southern part of the continent had especially many countries compared to other regions, and accordingly, a variety of cultures existed. Particularly in the cultural sphere of the Dragon King faith in the southwest and the Beast King faith in the southeast, countries and regions – which was very acceptant of the unhuman species and deepened their friendship – frequently existed.

Nevertheless, this situation where that much diversified monster species could speak human language and were being commanded in a single corps, should be said as abnormal. What the many merchants were wary of could be said of that unknown nature.

“Those guys ... the heck are they?”

“I don’t know.”

Words of one merchant, yet Welkano quietly shook his head.

Naturally, Welkano too, had asked Ryuzaki about that. *What on earth is this gathering, what is your objective?*

According to Ryuzaki's words, they had to unify and move together due to the course of events, now to achieve everyone's objective, they were aiming for a forest in the east. In the eastern part of the continent, further east of the Soleil Principality spread a dense forest.

Perhaps, this was not a lie. This was Welkano hunch speaking when listening to those words. But neither did they tell him the truth. There were circumstances which couldn't be told to this side.

Still, even bearing that circumstances in mind, Ryuzaki's offer was a grateful one for the maritime caravan. Since every adventurers hired as guards had been swept away, they were uneasy to go on a voyage riddled with dangers unknown without a single thing that could be called war potential. Calculating from the position of the moon and stars, this sandy beach was considerably distant from the Maritime United Nations Albadanba. In the nearby sea inhabited the sahadins, and even without those, the sea was full of danger. Kraken, sea serpent, and then pirates. To protect the ship and merchandise from those sort of things, as expected, war potential would be necessary.

"Captain, I understand your feeling, but it's still too risky."

A young merchant, dissatisfaction bared, said so.

"President, you must have known this as well. The story of a bunch who gave their name as Red Moon attacking various places in the continent."

"And then, you're saying that has something to do with Ryuzaki-dono?"

"Can you say there's not?"

Being asked in this way, even Welkano couldn't refute.

"Even if the Commerce Guild was said to have been granted relatively civil liberties, the headquarter is in Arkarg, territory of the Empire. Being imprudent and the Empire will keep an eye on us."

Things like risks, he knew all too well. If taking a safe plan, it would be best to move the ship along the coast after this and go ask for protection from Filnand Dragon Knight Kingdom.

But at the point they formed the caravan, moved the ships, hired adventurers, a lot of money was moving. If they turned back here, they would be unable to make even a single copper coin despite having paid that much money, and

made a huge deficit. The young merchants here would eventually hang themselves.

There was no choice but to move forward. And then to move forward, hiring escorts was necessary.

Best of all, they didn't demand money as compensation.

"If you say you understand my feelings, I also understand your complains as well."

Welkano sat down on a wooden box and said so.

"But we're already in a situation of '*checkmate*'. Unless we advance in spite of taking some risks, we won't have even a sliver of hope left."

In the end, those words summed up everything. The safe plan they could take at the moment would offer them no prospect.

These merchants too, were not foolish enough not to understand that. Emotional aspect, or possibly instinctual aspect governing the sense of crisis, those had a strong influence on them wanting to deny Ryuzaki group. Probably even without Welkano here, someone else would reach the same conclusion, and then they would be bathed in questions like this as well.

In their present state, there was nothing that seemed better than Ryuzaki's story.

What they demanded as compensation for the escort were 3 things. *Firstly*, guarantee their person against the other side when entering Albadanba's port.

Secondly, Ryuzaki asked to gather the necessary materials and carry it to the designated southeastern part of the continent.

And lastly, they were asked to offer human's lifeblood – not to lethal degree, mind you.

The first proposal, he swallowed it. The second proposal, he formally informed that it wasn't impossible, provided that monetary exchange occurred. About the third proposal, as expected, he rejected it.

"Besides, captain, the storm we encountered as well..."

Being told so, Welkano narrowed his eyes.

“I think you remember. That guy raised a storm.... Wasn’t that guy a fellow of Red Moon too?”

What flitted through his mind was memory of a few days ago.

The sky that was supposed to be clear suddenly was shrouded by dark clouds, rain and wind attacked the caravan. The sea intently raged, high waves rushed at the ship’s sides. As a result, several merchant ships had capsized, only Welkano’s ship barely survived.

And then Welkano and them witnessed it, in the air within the rainstorm floated a devil’s figure. Whole body wrapped in black armor, well muscled physique. Darkish skin, trimmed hair. Red blood eyes, sharp fangs peeked out from his mouth. That thing certainly did have a figure very similar to Red Moon gang in the information.

“Whatever it its,”

Welkano once again spoke up.

“It doesn’t change that we have to move forward. Even if they are the Red Moon gang, which in turn, a comrade of that armored man who made our maritime caravan fall to destruction.”

In the end, the conclusion remained unchanged.

“Any dispute regarding this matter won’t be accept later. It seems that their ship will finish its repair the day after tomorrow. We too will finish our ship’s repair and then depart for Albadanba.”

If there were at least 2 ships, they would be able to let only the applicants return via the Dragon Knight Kingdom.

The words they said, Welkano had taken everything in to consideration and was discussing. Now he had no choice but to acknowledge the risk and carry it.

Supposing those guys came into contact with them while having some kind of malicious intent, they had no move to take at all.

But in that case, I will die while being cursed by the young merchants riding the ship, Welkano thought.

“Then, we will be heading for the said island country together with the humans of that maritime caravan.”

“Right. I more or less feel like a minimum negotiation is possible.”

After returning to the heavy cruiser branch school, Kyousuke had a conversation with Rin.

Previously, Ryuzaki had returned to Kyousuke and the others' place with thumbs up. Everyone was a little relieved. Thereafter, they listened to the details regarding the contents of the negotiation from Ryuzaki, adding Kaoruko and made a gathering for a little while, and then repatriated to the heavy cruiser branch school.

The surroundings had become totally dark, fire was burning here and there on the beach. In this place, the students greeted a little relax time while listening to the sound of the waves washing ashore. Some students seemed to be planning to spend the night not at the heavy cruiser branch school but here on this beach.

“Only, the matter about offering blood to Akai seemed to have been refused as expected.”

“Ahh, so that's really the case.”

Rin nodded as well.

“But was Akai-san okay? Something like this, you know? I means she's being irritated...”

“She won't become like an alcoholic without alcohol, right?”

“Geezz! Kyousuke-kun, even though I have been carefully choosing my words!”

Himemizu Rin bounced her entire body in a huff. She was right at home with slime motion.

“Akai has calmed down after talking to Sakuma and Kaoruko.”

“Ah, really. That's good.”

Rin, with an absolutely relieved appearance, said so. Not that there was any facial expression to slime, but as of late, Kyousuke had started being able to read her emotion quite well. Was it a thing called *accustomed*? He somehow understood the subtle nuance loaded into every words or the rhythm of bouncing her body.

While gazing at that scene, suddenly, he asked.

“Hey Rin, I don’t know if it’s okay to ask this kind of thing, but,”
“What what? Try saying it?”
“No.... As expected, it’s rude?”

For Rin, am I a close friend like myself, Akira and Kogane, or like Akai, Sakuma and Kaoruko? He thought. But he also felt that speaking that aloud was a little lacking in delicacy.

Thinking so, he said it, but Rin bluntly pouted. To be accurate, she took a pouting gesture.

“I like said, I think it’s not good to refrain like that. Well, try saying it?”
“No, I just wonder who it is for Rin, a friend like that to whom you can talk and calm down.”
“Ah—, me? For me, there’s not many in this class. Speaking strongly it would be Tsurugin. Well, since I myself won’t become too mentally unstable.”
“Really. Rin is strong...”

Sitting on the sandy beach, he gazed at the bonfire in front. On the sandy beach at night was a queer scene where a skeleton and a slime – illuminated by the flame – did nothing but talk. Kyouzuke had completely gotten used to it, but if Welkano or Remy saw this scene, they would unintentionally wrinkled their eyebrows.

He too, was a little worry about the thing Remy told him. At such a time, if you can confide, discuss with someone even the trivial things, it would be more relieving. Because she said she was cool with almost none of that, Rin was strong.

“...Ne~, Kyouzuke-kun.”

Muttered, Rin called Kyouzuke’s name.

“Nn, what’s wrong?”

“...No, it’s nothing.”

“What’s this? You was telling me ‘*you can say it*’.”

Hesitating to say something was unlike her.

“No, somehow.... On a sandy beach at night, watching the bonfire with only

the two of us, such a story ... is supposed to be romantic, but, well..."

"Ah—..."

Apparently, she was thinking about the same thing.

"(Romantic?)"

There is never a thing called mood for a skeleton and a slime, but Rin is also thinking about such thing, Kyouusuke thought.

Before they knew it, himself and Rin had become close enough to call each other by their first name. No, it wasn't before they knew it. It was since they EX-combine at that time. Some people seemed to want to say something about the two's relationship, some didn't seem interested at all.

17 years since Kyouusuke was born, never had he got something like a lover. Hino Akira was like *that*, the bunch who jokingly said such a thing always existed a certain number, but well, just leave it alone.

Because he didn't have any until now, he didn't know the thing call '*How to make a lover*', neither was there any book about it – a trustworthy one, that is.

A frank story, Rin, himself, like, he thought.

But she had neither said «*I like you*» nor «*Please go out with me*». Only she did show favored attitude. Since it wasn't as if she had clearly said it, Kyouusuke still had quite some anxiety remained.

Himemizu Rin was originally a girl who came in contact with anyone cheerfully and gently.

Because Rin was like that, that Kogane got a favorable impression at first.

For Kyouusuke who had got a bitter experience in middle school, he had made this habit to always doubt whether this kind of thing was no more than a «*disgusting misunderstanding of a gloomy bastard*».

"Ahh, it's okay. Kyouusuke-kun."

As Kyouusuke was thinking in anguish, Rin said such a thing.

"Because I'm embarrassed as well, I just didn't say it."

"Re—really?"

Nevertheless, «*Then, Rin is my girlfriend now?*», that, Kyouusuke couldn't ask.

“There you go Sachi!”

“Ehh, eehhh. Wait, wait a minute...”

A little bit away, there were shadows watching over that group of Kyousuke.

Sakuma Sachiko, and Okama Kaoru. Succubus and incubus, indeed it was an impure combination, but the appearance of the incubus pushing the succubus' back clearly could only be seen as intimate brother and sister (or sisters). The truth too wasn't too far off.

Kaoru had been pushing Sakuma's back since a little while ago, and naturally, there was a reason for it.

Sakuma, as of now, was way behind others. Speaking without holding anything back, it's a love story.

It wasn't really certain enough to say whether or not it was *'her beloved'*, but Sakuma Sachiko had been conscious of Utsurogi Kyousuke ever since they were still humans. She had, but after Kyousuke came over here, he often hung out with Himemizu Rin, and their distance had been steadily shortening.

Frankly, she was careless. The human days, no girls would fall in love with Kyousuke, so in that sense, it was perfectly Sakuma's exclusive market. After coming over here, Sakuma became a succubus, Rin a slime, but that as a conclusion didn't work to Sakuma's advantage at all. Unable to maintain the advantage in the human days was Sakuma's blunder herself.

Her feelings that didn't become dirty so far might have been caused by her naivety and childishness about love affairs. Nevertheless, she did have *'envy'* of Rin, she did feel irritated at herself for not being able to do anything.

So the reason Kaoru had been pushing Sakuma's back was because even any chance to recover would be gone if she didn't hurry up.

“Say, Sachi, from what I can see, Rin hasn't confess her love yet.”

Said Kaoru.

“She hasn't, I think, but.... But then, those two absolutely are already lovers...”

Unnoticed, they had started calling each other by their first name. Even if she was to enter the fray now, she probably wouldn't have a chance. She did,

however, feel envious, and if possible, she herself too wanted such a relationship.

The day they departed from the old castle, she had said well to Kyousuke *«I will do my best!»,* but then she didn't know how to do her best.

However, Kaoru said:

“But those two are high-school students, isn't that right?”

“...Is Kaoru-chan any different?”

“High-school students can't understand something like the subtle difference in atmosphere whether or not ones are dating. Good? So you can't recognize that they are dating as a fact when they still haven't put it into words such as *'we're dating',* or *'I like you'.* Which is why Sachi, if you go from the side and perfectly said *'I like you',* you can recover your advantage in one go.”

“If he refuse then I won't recover even a little bit...”

Incidentally, incubi and succubi have a racial ability call *«Temptation»*. It was something that could turn the other party good will toward themselves, making them do their bidding. Kaoru appeared to have completely mastered it, even imps and saharagins had been subdued. Even right now, he had entrusted the caravan's guard to the subdued monsters and showed his face over here. But Sakuma, while two months had nearly passed since she reincarnated as a succubus, didn't use such an ability at all.

«No good Sachi, you still didn't use «Temptation»? Since you have become a succubus after much trouble, you have to finish it early.»

How far have you gone with the boy you're dating? With that feeling, Kaoru had been forcefully and continuously reproached her.

The fact that she couldn't perfectly utilize a succubus' abilities also meant that there was still much she could contribute to the class. In addition, dream demon's Phase 2 ability was related to *«Temptation»*, without being able to use *«Temptation»*, she couldn't reach Phase 2.

Even now, Sakuma could contribute plenty to the class as a combat member. But Okama Kaoru probably could contribute more than what Sakuma had been doing. Adding to the magical ability similar to Sakuma's were the monsters he subdued using *«Temptation»*. If imps and saharagins could be instructed freely,

the class' performance would rise significantly.

Think about the class, Sakuma should quickly master «*Temptation*» as well. But, using «*Temptation*» on opponents she didn't even like felt wrong somehow and she couldn't use it until now.

However, yes, it's however.

However, if she was to put «*Temptation*» on the opponent she fancied, making him turn around, wasn't it somehow unfair then? That thought definitely did exist in Sakuma. Moreover, Kyouzuke and Rin were on intimate terms. Forcibly turning his interest to herself with a succubus' ability was, no matter how you put it, not a good thing.

Naturally, the effect of «*Temptation*» was temporary, the degree of effect could also be regulated. Having said that, Sakuma still didn't feel like using her power on Kyouzuke at all.

So with that reason, Sakuma Sachiko had been so tedious in this way.

"...Still, should I use «*Temptation*»?"

Sakuma said such a thing, Kaoru shrugged.

"Who knows? I've never used it to drop the person in mind. Even if I use it, the effect is temporary."

"B—but, using «*Temptation*» on a person you don't like, is, somehow..."

"Well, that's a personal matter of taste. Even love confession such as '*I like you*' isn't so different from «*Temptation*» in the end. If you confess, the other party will look at you temporarily, but whether or not they come to like you depends on the person themselves."

«*Hmm*», Kaoru greatly stretched.

"I'm going to the caravan again to take over the watch, but you do your best, okay?"

"Y—yeah..."

"Well then~."

Okama Kaoru spread her wings and disappeared into the darkness of night. Sakuma, clenching her fists, once again looked at Kyouzuke's direction. Next to Kyouzuke was Himemizu Rin. Since they were a skeleton and a slime,

such things like expression couldn't be seen, but they looked to be having fun talking. Was there really any room for her to get in there?

No, I must not think about whether there is or not. I have to do my best and push in.

"All, all right..."

Sakuma clenched her fists and started to walk toward Kyouzuke group.

She had already fallen behind quite a lot. If she could take even a little advantage by using «*Temptation*». That feeling started to winning over little by little. As expected, she was jealous when looking at Kyouzuke and Rin being on good terms with each others.

It wasn't as if she was going to make him fall for her permanently. Just a little, just making him interested in her for a bit. If the aftertaste was bad, she could just stop doing it, she wasn't particularly thinking about thoroughly turning the good will toward Rin to herself. Yes, just a little bit, let's narrow down the effect of «*Temptation*»....

"Huh...?"

Suddenly, Sakuma halted, inclining her head.

"How do I whittle down its power..."

At this timing, Sakuma Sachiko belatedly recalled that she had no inkling of how to use «*Temptation*» at all.

"...I should have asked Kaoru-chan to teach me and practice it."

A few days have passed. The renovation of the heavy cruiser branch school was progressing favorably, the caterpillar unit was finally going to be sunk into the sea. The engine motor once again was connected to the propeller, the heavy cruiser branch school could float on the sea. Kuremori, who had made the caterpillar unit was making just a little sentimental expression.

Now that they were going to traverse the sea after this, Hanazono, feeling the salt-air damage, was making a partitioning screen surrounding the field.

Furthermore, a rope ladder dropped down from the ship's tip, allowing the Uozumi siblings to go up and down.

When everyone boarded the branch school and waited for a little while, the maritime caravan's sailing ship coming from the north, ran atop the sea. As expected, the scale was remarkably different, so they appeared to be surprised by the size of the heavy cruiser branch school of this side.

"How should I put this, it's a sailing ship?"

Kyousuke, as though he had belatedly recalled something, put a hand on his chin.

"It can't sail without wind. What do we do?"

"If there's no wind, you can just make it."

In the direction Ryuzaki was pointing, several students was having a meeting, talking about something.

Harui Yuka, Kaminari Totoha, Saruwatari Futa and then Karasuma Yoshitsune. These four people one could hardly find any common points at a glance, but the three beside Kaminari could use wind attribute magic. Since Kaminari could raise wind with her big wings, these four were probably the personnel in charge of sending wind to the merchant ship's sails.

"If there is this much difference in the ships's size, it may have been better to look after some of the caravan's luggage."

"I also suggested that, but they don't really seem to trust us much."

The communication between the heavy cruiser branch school and the merchant ship would make use of the imps Kaoruko had subdued. Other than those, the flight-capable group, starting from the above-mentioned wind-raising personnel, had been decided to concurrently take the post of liaison because they could freely come and go between the two ships.

Naturally, most of the caravan members were strongly wary of this side. It wouldn't be a good idea to poorly let monsters coming and going, stimulating them. It was better at a degree of letting the minimum contact personnel standing-by on the other side and periodically changing shift.

The heavy cruiser branch school would be advancing through the sea by being guided by the merchant ship. Approximately a few hours before departure.

"Ou, Ryuzaki. I want to talk to that human call Welkano about the route soon."

Gofunkawahara, having completely gotten used to the position of the helmsman these days, showed up from the cabin. Ryuzaki nodded as well.

“Ahh, it’s time already? I’m coming soon, please wait for a bit on the deck.”
“Sure.”

Gofunkawahara unsteadily started walking toward the deck. If looking at a goblin that could talk so fluently like him, as expected, Welkano party was going to get a surprise again, Kyouzuke thought.

“Well then, Utsurogi. See you later.”
“Sure.”

When Ryuzaki headed for the deck as well, being left behind, Kyouzuke was completely bored stiff.

Shall I go to Rin’s place? Kyouzuke thought.
After all, the sense of distance between him and her remained ambiguous. Even these past few days, he mostly couldn’t shorten it. There was also the reason that their workplace were different.

But Rin now, had been continuing the suspicious action called «*Special Training to Get Used to Sea Water*» following what happened a few days ago. Since interfering with that too much was bad, should he go see the state of Akira who had become completely groggy in preparation for the voyage after this.

Just when he thought so and aimed his feet toward the sailors room.

“U–Utsurogi-kun!”
“Nn, Sakuma?”

Kyouzuke looked back, there stood the owner of the voice.

Despite not preparing for battle right now, Sakuma was wearing the aforementioned bondage-like clothes with excessively little clothes area; not the usual neat and clean one piece purchased at the Knight Kingdom bazaar. At the same time as he thought it was unusual, this costume of Sakuma was a little difficult to directly look at. Her appearance showing just a little bit bashfulness was reminded him of her just after the transference.

Big Burst, Hakuba’s words flitted through his mind.

“Ne, ne~, Utsurogi-kun.”

“Y–yes?”

Sakuma Sachiko, white skin faintly flushed, said this:

“Could you please, look into my eyes?”

Chapter 48 — Maidens' Oath

She couldn't deny that there was impatience in her heart.

After all, she couldn't confess her feelings when they were still humans, neither could she now that they came over here. Meanwhile, Utsurogi Kyousuke was rapidly getting closer to Himemizu Rin and it became even more difficult to confess.

While that may be true, it was still a fact that the thought of having to use «*Temptation*» existed. Not that she wanted him to turn around so much so that she would use such an unfair mean, distorting his feelings. Generally, she didn't think of doing something like forcibly pulling Kyousuke and Rin apart. Because Kyousuke when being together with Rin seemed to really enjoy himself.

But still, one moment. Just a moment only, if he turned toward her.

She, as a succubus, was going to contribute to the class from now on as well. She probably couldn't afford to work as an attacker by means of Chaos Magic like always. That had never been the proper characteristic of a dream demon. The battle from now on would intensify, once it became a free-for-all, the effect of «*Temptation*» – temporarily enlisting the enemies as allies – would be tremendous.

The time when she had to use it would eventually come.

She had already knew that there were people evaluating her as «*playing innocence*» from the human days.

Sakuma too, didn't plan to put on airs as pure hearted that much. Nevertheless, she would absolutely feel shy about using «*Temptation*» on just any and everyone. So she didn't use it until now. Naturally, she thought that using this to make Kyousuke turn her way was outrageous.

Still, she would have to use it eventually.

She would have to use «*Temptation*» on monsters she had never seen and/or never talked to.

In that case, at least the first time would better for the person she liked.

What boosting Sakuma's heart at the end was such a thought.

Okama Kaoru said that he had never used «*Temptation*» to drop the person he liked, neither did he plan to use it. That was definitely more correct. Nevertheless, he didn't deny Sakuma's way of doing things, he was also supporting her. He even taught her when she said she didn't know how to use «*Temptation*».

Although she would have given up if he did told her that way of using it was no good.

In the end, with Kaoru's help, Sakuma had decided the first opponent to use «*Temptation*» on to be Utsurogi Kyouusuke.

She knew that it might have been an act of trampling down his heart. She also knew that its effect wouldn't last forever. She was going to suppress its power to the minimum. She didn't think to erase Rin's image from his heart even for an instant. Perhaps he wouldn't even turn around to her.

Even so, the first «*Temptation*» was better to use on Kyouusuke.

«It's fine, Sachi. First of all, make the opponent look into your eyes.»

Kaoru had lectured her so about the procedure to use it.

«Well, actually, it's not really necessary to make him look. However, it's important to make the other party strongly aware of your existence. It's still fine if you're confident with words. But making him look is most certain.»

She had a feeling that she had never once look directly at Kyouusuke's face ever since the human days.

Kyouusuke now was a skeleton. An ominous, hair-raising, empty human skeleton. Still, one would understand that it was Kyouusuke if they looked at him directly. It seemed that there was something called visual field within the eye sockets that had become empty. Just that she was a little anxious that her own figure didn't projected inside his pupils.

But if possible, she wanted to look directly at him once when he was still human. Same as herself, Utsurogi Kyouusuke had always been difficult to be said as bright, but that tender looks alone, she remembered. Still, looking at him

directly now, she just couldn't superimpose that figure of Kyousuke and Kyousuke as of now.

*«You must not be shy. You too must look directly at him, and whatever you say, if you set your heart on wanting to make this kid in front of you yours, **'Temptation'** should be naturally invoked. Only, if your thought is too strong, you won't be able to suppress its power, so you have to properly be aware of that.»*

Sakuma Sachiko continued to look at Kyousuke.

I want Utsurogi Kyousuke. To be precise, I want his heart. I'm not saying all of its, neither is it forever. However, even just a moment, just a little bit....

"Sakuma,"

Since the skeleton in front said so, her shoulders unintentionally shivered.

"Ah, yess..."

"I'm looking into your eyes, but ... what's the matter?"

"Ehh...? Ah, eh...?"

The skeleton had no expression. But she could feel his voice was a little bewildered.

At least, she couldn't think that the effects of *«Temptation»* had appeared. Was it not effective? Or else she couldn't invoke it? Sakuma didn't understand well. Was the strength of her thought being too weak the cause? Or else a more different reason?

But strengthening her thought more than this might thoroughly snatch away Kyousuke's heart, she was scared to speak of it even if the effects were only temporary. Sakuma's *«Temptation»* experiment – without getting any results – was put to stop here.

"Ehh, eh, I mean.... That didn't particularly have any deep meaning. Umm..."

Maybe, just maybe, it's about that.

Phase 2 ability *«Brainwashing Strengthening»* that had been discussed a little bit before. She had heard it was something that spread the effective range of *«Temptation»*. It was said that without that activated, *«Temptation»* wouldn't work on the same sex, and depending on the monster species, it wouldn't exert

any effect at all.

“Is it nothing? It seems stopping speaking in the middle like that isn’t the best.”

“That, that’s right.... Sorry...”

But there was also no way she could say something like «*I was trying to brainwashing you just now*».

Yes, it was brainwashing. «*Temptation*» received benefits from «*Brainwashing Strengthening*» which strengthened mental manipulation type abilities. That is to say, it was splendidly brainwashing. She had been trying to do that to Kyouzuke just now. For her selfish emotions. Just for the mere feelings of the first one being him was better.

If putting that into words, her self-hatred would be very severe. Right now she was even thinking that it was good that it had no effects on him.

Ahh, but surely, this feeling too is temporary.
Sooner or later, when the story of her having to use «*Temptation*» on someone came up again, Sakuma would once again think about her first time. She would absolutely hate it if it was some monsters somewhere that she neither liked nor anything.

Then, how about getting the consent of the person himself at least?

“Utsurogi-kun.”

“Sure, what is it?”

*Just once is okay, please be ‘**Tempted**’ by me.*

She could just say that few words. If it was no good, then give up. Could she give up? Truly? Her consciousness went round and round, swirling into a vortex inside her head. In the first place, wasn’t this no different whatsoever from the «*Love Confession*» that she was thoroughly scared of and didn’t say it so far? Scared of being rejected. Scared of being turned down. Scared of him shaking his head.

“Fine, fine weather we have today!!”

The heck was that?

The heck was that cliched way of glossing things over?

Wasn't there some other better way of saying?

"That's right. Since I heard that the maritime caravan was set adrift by a storm, I was worry, but it's good that it's sunny."

"Yeah..."

Kyousuke, touching the edge of the deck, gazed out at the ocean. The waves were calm. In his view spread the wide horizon.

"Then, the truth is?"

"Ehh?"

Taken by surprise, Sakuma unintentionally raised her face.

"Surprised? Since I too, am annoyed at being told various things such as not being able to understand human's heart, empty, hollow, *etc.* I have been following Ryuzaki's example and practicing seeing through the thought of the other guys."

Kyousuke, turning his skull around, looked over here.

"Since even I have known Sakuma since the library, I thought you're hiding something. Was it a hit?"

"...No."

Sakuma laughed a little and lied a second time.

"Really. I still have a long way to go..."

As expected, it was good that «*Temptation*» wasn't effective. Even now she seemed like being crushed by the feelings of guilt. Like this, somewhere in her heart, she couldn't even enjoy the '*casual conversation*' with him she had been eagerly looking forward to.

I should properly declare it someday. It's better if Kyousuke is my first. Let's ask him again after properly harden my resolve. Since it's not fair to talk only to Kyousuke, let's properly talk to Rin too. No, may be I better talk to Akira too? I may be refused. Even supposing I get their consents, it won't change the fact that it is unnecessary interference to Utsurogi Kyousuke's heart. Surely Rin too won't feel too good about this. If anyone among them refuse this, let's give up.

Give up,

Give up, then do what?

*At that time, can I cleanly try to use «**Temptation**» on other monsters I absolutely know nothing about? Would I be able to feel like wanting to make the other party whom I don't even like mine?*

“(Let’s think about it at that time.)”

Sakuma Sachiko shut her eyes and quietly thought so.

Anyway, «*Temptation*» might not work on Kyouzuke as of now. It might be necessary to raise her power up to Phase 2. This was her own problem. The time to face herself was going to come soon.

She might possibly procrastinate the problem, but Sakuma somehow had no choices but to postpone the feeling of wanting to «*Tempt*» Kyouzuke.

“Advance at very slow speed! Real—ly slow—ly!”

Gofunkawahara’s cheerful order resounded within the cabin. Ryuzaki, arms crossed, was looking in front.

In the form of chasing after the merchant ship of the maritime caravan, the heavy cruiser branch school had departed as well. Because the leading ship was a sailing ship, they would be advancing considerably slowly. Fortunately, entertainment had been enriched with video games and board games obtained in the old castle, so the students didn’t seem troubled with killing time. The students still had many duties such as sending wind to the sailing ship, calming the waves with water attribute spirit magic. Since they had almost zero knowledge in moving the ship – to be precise, on sea – they had no choices but to steadily execute the things they heard from Welkano-shi.

“Well, I guess there’s also the memo Kogane left?”

“Ahh, more or less...”

Presently, the ‘*Memo*’ Ryuzaki kept had ascended to a considerable number.

The number one helpful about knowing about this world, *Selena’s Memo*’. Written about Phase 2 abilities or Red Moon, ‘*Akai’s Memo*’. And then written by Kogane Yoshiki when remodeling the heavy cruiser,

'Kogane's Memo'.

This Kogane's Memo was currently the only evidence that he had existed within this class. This Memo that had been written by making the best use of his military nerd knowledge had many unnecessary information, but it wasn't so boring as a reading material, as a result, that memo about navigation that used to be *'unnecessary information'* was going to be helpful after this.

"Then, Ryuzaki. What kind of country is this Albadanba we're heading to?"
"As far as I've heard, it seems to be an Allied Nations made by gathering several island countries. One country per island ... well, there's also islands with several countries as well though, it has a parliamentary system that the chieftains over there discuss and decide the country's policy."

It probably feels like a southern country such as Micronesia or Polynesia, Ryuzaki was thinking. Since it was out of the Empire's dominated region, they would probably be able to get their stay approved if Welkano-shi group properly guided them.

What worrisome was that the part about *being out of the Empire's dominated region'* would satisfy the conditions for Red Moon's activity base as well. According to Akai's story, it seemed that there were blood kins that had infiltrated to this world close to 10 years ago in order to solidify their foundation for activities, but it seemed that she didn't know until the part of where those were.

They would be on the sea several days after this, a few weeks if long. Supposing their movements were sensed by Red Moon, it might very well develop into a navel battle with them.

"(Well, there's no choices but to pray we won't bump into them, is it...?)"

Ryuzaki, with arms crossed, gazed out at the ocean and thought so.

For a little while after the ship departed, the students, while going **kyaa kyaa** was watching the outside view on the deck. There were even students saying things such as *‘we’re crossing the sea for the first time I was born’*. Quite a bit of a sightseeing cruise feeling.

The ones to become the main labor force on the ship were the goblins Gofunkawahara brought along and the imps and sahagins accompanying Kaoruko. Especially the sahagins – similar to the Uozumi siblings – were useful in diving in the sea and getting fishes.

Himemizu Rin, while watching such students from a corner of the deck, was endeavor to produce salt and fresh water.

“You’re bringing out your spirit, Rin.”

Kensaki the Dullahan was sitting by her side with arms crossed.

“What I’m bringing out is only salt.... No, painful. Salty...”

While saying so, the amount of salt accumulated in the container had already exceeded 10 kilograms.

“I feel like we can make salt by sun drying normally, but...”

“Well – that’s – right. But then, the evaporated water is too wasteful in that case. Well, because water is like MP to me. It’s precious resources.”

It wasn’t necessary the case that there would always be students who could use water attribute spirit magic when the time came for it. As much as possible, she had to save up water in preparation for an emergency. The amount of water directly connected to her combat ability – naturally at normal time, but even at the time of performing Extreme Cross with Kyouzuke as well.

EX Combine would consume the *‘power of blood’* stored within Kyouzuke’s bones. Therefore they couldn’t carelessly combine, but Kyouzuke and Rin had practiced combining several times since then. As expected, it wouldn’t get to the sweet feelings like the first time anymore, if speaking of whether that was disappointing then it was disappointing, but the combine itself they were able to execute it smoothly. Depending on the situation they could transform into EX state from the Stream Cross state as well.

“Rin, can I ask something taking this opportunity?”

“Hou. I wonder what, Tsurugin.”

“Have you started going out with Utsurogi?”

“Buho...!”

She unintentionally spouted out.

“At, at first, that is ... but, I have suspected as much since the time you combined but...”

“Wa—wait. Wait a bit Tsurugin. That combine is not too ... unrelated, but, let’s see. Anyway, that’s not that way, okay?”

So far, Rin had never once declared that she was dating Kyousuke. Only, well, there were many students who sensed the atmosphere and noticed it. The prime example was Ryuzaki Kunihiro. Previously, he, with a whole face smile, had come saying «*Congratulations!*». He even said that «*I think I can accept it if it’s Utsurogi*». It was very awkward, but nothing breathing a word about that and returned such a feelings were the duties of the girl who jilted him, Rin too, said «*Thank you*» back with a poker face (not that she had any).

“So you should say it as well. Rin.”

Kohon, the headless public moral committee member cleared her throat.

“I think that Sakuma may like Utsurogi as well.”

“You think, or rather, she’s already serious about that Tsurugin.”

“Wha—what? Was that the case...!?”

Yes, Sakuma Sachiko like Kyousuke as well. Therefore, Rin felt just a little indebted toward her.

Only, the thought of feeling apologetic toward Sakuma itself might be arrogance so she had never talk about that matter with her. Even though Sakuma had always been thinking about Kyousuke, always been worrying about him, the one who remained closest to him now was Rin.

“Re—really.... Was it noticed when looking at it? Ummu...”

“Doesn’t Tsurugin have a person like that?”

“I am the public moral committee member! Furthermore, I have dedicated my youth to the sword! I’m not planning to date any boy now!”

“Well, I was also going to dedicate to track-and-field but then...”

The case of meeting Kyousuke was bad. No, should it be said as good?

She was going to dedicate her youth to track-and-field, but to 'run', combining with Kyousuke was indispensable, 'running' itself was the same as Kyousuke. Before very long, well, her feelings were being dragged along and it became the mess it was now.

"Then, as for Tsurugin, do you want to support Saa-chan?"

"I don't mean to say that, but.... Looking at Utsurogi and Sakuma talking before departure..."

"Hmm."

"How should I say this, it felt like they were staring at each other..."

I see. Rin interrupted the salt making and pondered.

Should she say *it stands to reason*? Would Sakuma become serious and started dropping Kyousuke? Sakuma was a succubus, tribal ability was «*Temptation*». If she just used that ability, it wouldn't even be a battle as expected.

But there was no particular impatient feelings within Rin. Was it because she made light of Sakuma, thinking that she would never use up to «*Temptation*»? Or was it because she couldn't even imagine Kyousuke yielding to the power of «*Temptation*»?

No, If Sakuma got serious normally even without using «*Temptation*», it still wouldn't be a battle.

"Saa-chan has big boobs, doesn't she..."

"You're still on about that...?"

"Well, let's talk with Saa-chan for a bit."

"No way ... a scene of carnage!?"

Kensaki raised a bewildered scream.

"You're going to say something like ... «*You won't take my Kyousuke-kun, you thieving cat*»!?"

"I won't I won't. Tsurugin, you have quite a daytime-drama brain there..."

"Ne~, Kaoru-chan."

Sitting down on the bed in the cabin, Sakuma asked Kaoru.

“What is it? Sachi.”

“Kaoru-chan, on whom did you use the first «*Temptation*»?”

Polishing his nails by himself, Okama Kaoru heard those words and looked up. This action that was exactly like Akai, was in fact his original.

After linking up with Kaoru, the time when Sakuma consulted with him had increased profusely. Sakuma had heavily rely on Kaoru ever since the human days, but the fact that they had reincarnated as the same species of monster meant it was easier to confide species-specific trouble.

“It’s a kid you know too.”

“Eh, Goubayashi-kun?”

“Wrong. It’s Zeku-chan.”

Zeku. It was a wild ogre that became obedient after being beaten up by Goubayashi once.

One thing or another, now he was riding on this ship as a member of this class. Not just Goubayashi, he was on good term with Okumura as well and was getting used to the class where conversation was impossible for him. At the moment, he should be playing video game together with the boys of the class.

The fact that that Zeku had once been attacked by «*Temptation*» was surprising.

“The one I met first when wandering the wasteland together with Gen-chan was that kid. Live or die, it was such a timing, so well, I just reflexively. I come to know that it is temporary thanks to that...”

Goubayashi who came running after that, performed a one-on-one fist fight with the ogre whose tempted state had been solved, in the end, Goubayashi completely knocked him down and named him Zeku.

Zeku was a male. The fact that the incubus Kaoru was able to tempted him meant that Kaoru, at that point in time, had already transitioned to Phase 2.

“...How did it feel?”

“I don’t remember. I would probably die if I got beaten then. Well, the first time I used «*Temptation*» was like that, so it made me understand I can use it on monsters and I’m not that resistant to it. Perhaps I’m just paralyzed by it though.”

“Really...”

Preferably, if she too was attacked by something and was cornered to an unavoidable situation, she might not have to be so troubled in this way. After using «*Temptation*» once, she too would be able to give up using it on Kyouzuke, was that really how it would be? Or else she would regret it, thinking she should have used it on him from the start.

“I understand the feeling of wanting to use the first time for a person you like.”

Said Kaoru.

“Especially since Sachi is meek. You will have resistance to use «*Temptation*» on whomever, so at least you want to get through the first time with the boy you like. Therefore, I can’t stop you.”

“But, Kaoru-chan didn’t use it on the boy you like, right?”

“Well.... There’s no person I like in this class. I thought someone like Gen-chan may be fine, but ... well, I’m okay like this. But you’re right, I don’t feeling like using it to drop the person I like. I may hesitate if I’m in the same situation as Sachi, it’s just that much.”

When they talked that much, **kon kon**, suddenly knocking sounds came from the door.

“Saa-chan, you’re there? It’s Himemizu.”

Hearing that name, Sakuma’s head turned pure white for a moment.

It was Himemizu Rin. Why did Rin expressly come to this place? No way, was her attempt to tempt Kyouzuke exposed?

For a moment, Sakuma hesitated whether or not to pretend to be out, but she finally resigned. Shaking her head, sweeping away any worldly thoughts, she called out to Rin on the other side of the door.

“I’m here. Himemizu-san, please come in.”

Clank, the door opened.

“Excuse me for disturbing. Oh, Kaoruko-chan.”

“Yes, Rin. Am I a hindrance, I wonder?”

“It’s not like you’re a hindrance, but well, please—”

“I will excuse myself then.”

Can’t you stay and support me? Sakuma entertained herself with such a thought for a moment, and again knocked herself on the head. *You reap what you sow. Then I have to deal with it on my own. I don’t have any right to say this and that to Kaoru-chan.*

“Rin, even if there was anything, I was the one who instigated her. So please don’t blame Sachi too much.”

Just before leaving, Kaoru left behind those words. Sakuma felt herself became more pathetic.

Remaining inside the room were just Sakuma and Rin.

“I’m, I’m sorry!”

First of all, Sakuma apologized to Rin.

She didn’t know if she would be forgiven if she apologized. But she couldn’t help but do it. She did such an outrageous thing such as putting her hands on other people’s boyfriend, launching «*Temptation*» at them. Even though she should have known it would come to this. Her self-hatred was getting bigger.

“No, about that, Saa-chan...”

Rin said in a puzzled voice.

“I didn’t come to blame Saa-chan or anything?”

“But, But I, tried to use «*Temptation*» on Utsurogi-kun...”

“Ah, you used it. Was it effective?”

A surprisingly indifferent response came back. Sakuma violently shook her head.

“Is that so, is that so. I’m a little relieved.”

“I’m sorry.... Even though Utsurogi-kun is going out with Himemizu-san...”

“Ah, that is...”

Rin brought out a little awkward voice and undulated her body.

“I like Kyousuke-kun, but I feel that it’s probably not a situation I can say

«*We're going out*» just yet.”

The words she said were unexpected.

“Eh, but.... Utsurogi-kun, likes Himemizu-san too, right...?”

“I don't know if I can say this, but, probably, yes.”

Those words weren't full of confidence, neither was it bragging, only bewilderment and a wavering heart were felt.

In the meantime, Sakuma recalled Kaoru's words.

You can't recognize that they are dating as a fact when they still haven't put it into words such as 'we're dating', or 'I like you', was what he said.

But, Kyoussuke and Rin have mutual love. If they can be aware of that, no one can object that they're already boyfriend and girlfriend, right?

“I'm just a little scared.”

Said Rin.

“Scared...?”

“Things like declaring «*I'm going out with Kyoussuke-kun*», or possibly telling Kyoussuke-kun «*Please go out with me*» and have his okay. I somehow feel like the pleasant relationship we have now will collapse if I just put those into words. Because Kyoussuke-kun will absolutely become conscious of it.”

Sakuma vaguely understood the meaning of the words «*conscious*». By putting their relationship into words as «*boyfriend and girlfriend*», it will become a burden to their actions. Utsurogi Kyoussuke was certainly a boy who paid especially attention to such a part.

“I like to run, but,”

Rin, at this late hour, said something everyone was already well aware of.

“I like to run. Rather than cutting through the goal tape, I like the time when I'm running. Maybe the current state feel just like when I'm running yet remain at a standstill just one step before the goal.”

Therefore, connecting words.

“Therefore, if Saa-chan cut the goal tape during that time, it will be vexing,

but I think that is something invited by my own negligence.”

Rin was saying that there was still room for Sakuma to cut the goal tape as well.

But those weren't words that would be much comforting for Sakuma. Sakuma knew that Rin didn't say that to comfort her, nevertheless, those weren't words to solve the ill feelings in her heart, and a lump remained deep inside.

“Himemizu-san, I...”

“Yup yup.”

“I'm actually ... such a helplessly sly, lewd girl...”

Wrong.

I didn't want to say this kind of thing. I wasn't trying to ask for forgiveness by saying this kind of thing.

But, facing Rin, Sakuma couldn't help but become aware of that once again.

Why did she become a succubus? Even now, she didn't try to seriously face it. She was scared of facing it and accepting it.

A devilish woman who tempted men, absorbing their essence. A dream demon, wet dream demon. She didn't want to think that the monster expressing her own heart would be something like that. But what about reality? She had found an excuse within herself and tried to snatch away Utsurogi Kyouusuke's heart. No, she was still thinking about even now. *It would be better if the first one was with Kyouusuke*, was that thought of hers really pure feelings?

“Everyone already knew that Saa-chan is ero-ero.”

Rin said so, all too indifferently.

“To the point of becoming a succubus, isn't what everyone is saying. But you may have become one because you want to make Kyouusuke-kun turn your way. However, such a thing is nothing to be ashamed of. I'm also interested in erotic things...”

“...Yeah.”

“Saa-chan, facing your inner self, is the first step to Phase 2 as well. Go at it vroom vroom.”

Phase 2. Hearing that word, Sakuma Sachiko raised her face.

If she could demonstrate Phase 2 ability, the effective target range of «*Temptation*» would greatly spread. Perhaps now that she was strongly aware of her inner self, «*Temptation*» might be effective to Kyouusuke as well. But that feeling just now withered in one go. She just couldn't feel like going to Kyouusuke's place and using «*Temptation*» on him anymore.

Did Himemizu Rin come here to do this from the start, or else the maliciousness in her was just removed as a result?

"Himemizu-san."

"Yup."

"I, like Utsurogi-kun so..."

"Yup."

"I will do my best."

Being told so, Rin twisted her body with all her strength.

"I can't quite say something like doing my best, but.... Yup, I will do my best too."

She had to accept it. The fact that there was a part of herself wanting to use «*Temptation*» on Utsurogi Kyouusuke.

There was a part of herself that was helplessly sly and lewd.

Only, before that, she had to make him turn her way with her own power. Can't be saying something like «*scary*». Even Rin was the same, fighting fear, albeit in a completely different form. Now that Rin was still just a step before the goal, there was still a chance.

If possible, it would be best if the first boy was him.

But if Rin reached the goal before her then it just couldn't be helped.

What would happen was still unknown.

Chapter 49 — Crossing the Sea

That day, like always, Tokihara participated in the chieftain conference.

This chieftain conference that was held once a month was very important to decide Albadanba policy for the next month. As a member of Albadanba, Tokihara who had completely become a regular by now also tightened his feelings and attended.

What was mainly discussed was the redistribution of the decided fishing grounds to each country, each tribes. Albadanba had marine products as the main protein sources, but the places where one could catch a lot of fishes or good fishes were strictly related to the sea current, and each time they would decide which tribe was allowed to catch fishes at which fishing grounds basing on the haul of the last one month. The penalty to the tribe who broke this rule was heavy, depending on the tribe, the criminals were even given the capital punishment sometime.

Tokihara, being good with number as he was, had come to hold an important arbitration right in these discussions since about 5 years ago. Not that there was no tribe who tried to bribe him, but for Tokihara, the confidence he had in these chieftain conference was definitely the best assets, and he had unyieldingly rejected all those.

This time as well, the redistribution of the fishing grounds had ended without a hitch.

“Next is about the merchant fleet coming from the continent.”

The chieftain serving as the chairman gravely said.

“The merchant fleet that is supposed to come along once every 6 months is considerably late.”

“Voyages depend on the sea and the wind, so this much is still within the common range.”

Tokihara responded so to the chieftain’s words, but he roughly knew what had happened.

The merchant fleet they were talking about was the maritime caravan,

dispatched by the Continental Southern Commerce Guild. They carried rare goods manufactured on the continent to Albadanba and traded for special magic ores mined in Albadanba, unusual marine products caught in its surrounding waters, and monster raw materials, etc. Albadanba which was completely out of the Central Empire's domination had few opportunities to come in contact with the Empire's technology, and the goods brought for trade were very popular with the citizens of Albadanba.

When trading, the chieftain of each tribe also participated, and in doing so, whether or not they purchased better or rarer items would influence the chieftain's evaluation within the tribe, albeit just a little. Because of that reason as well, the trade with the merchant fleet had begun to hold special meaning in Albadanba.

*That merchant fleet won't arrive at Albadanba.
It's just natural, the merchant fleet should be mostly destroyed by now.*

This story was vexing for Tokihara as a member of Albadanba, but he roughly recognized the fact.

The 'Rook' had moved.

One of the big game pieces that was mainly responsible for purging traitors, acting under the imperial command of the King. Rook 'Scar Red'.

In the maritime caravan was one Pawn infiltrated in the Continent Adventurer Guild. That rook, while withdrawing from the Southern Continent war front, received information about the treachery of the Pawn from the King and attacked the merchant fleet. As a result, almost every ships of the caravan had sunk. The remaining ships as well, were washed away to sahagins' habitat due to the sea current.

If those guys were lucky, they would be able to find their way to this Albadanba. Although, even assuming they arrived, it would be one ship. Trading with the merchant fleet would become considerably modest, it was even doubtful if it could be called a fleet, being one ship and all.

"I haven't heard that the sea nearby was rough.... Still, we don't know what will happen out at sea after all."

One chieftain said stroking his beard.

“Nothing can be done even if we worry about the merchant fleet.”

“Indeed, we can only pray for their safe voyage.”

“Fumu, quite so.”

“Bergel chieftain, what’s the next agenda?”

The chieftains unanimously said so and the agenda was washed away in the blink of an eye.

Irresponsibility around these part could be said to be characteristic of this Albadanba. Thanks to that, it had been a very comfortable hideout.

“This is the last agenda. It’s not enough to call it an agenda, but still.... The children disappearance incident has happened again.”

The chieftains weren’t discomposed, but their face uniformly stiffen, the atmosphere of the conference changed.

In the Maritime United Nations Albadanba, there was a children disappearance incident happening with the frequency from 1 to 2 months. Even when prohibiting the children from playing outside, it would definitely happen somewhere. There were various speculations such as they were swept away by high waves, devoured by carnivorous beast lurking in the jungle, etc., but a clear answer had never come out.

If only there was literacy culture in Albadanba and they were able to write down records of everything, there might have been someone who noticed that this incident started almost at the same time as Tokihara’s arrival.

The criminal of the disappearance incident was Tokihara. Unless he regularly consumed human blood, he would suffer from the blood craving symptoms. Therefore, he kidnapped humans and sucked their blood in the longest span of once every 2 months. That those were children was simply because of Tokihara’s taste. Moreover, disposing the corpses would be easier. Because there would be troubles to keep the one whose blood was sucked alive, he had no choices but to kill them regardless of whether they were adults or children.

“Tokihara, it seems this happens on the beach close to your house this time. One of the playing children went out of sight and never came back after that. Do you know anything?”

“No.... When did it happen?”

“It seems to be in the evening one week ago.”

“As expected, I don’t know.”

Tokihara feigned an ignorance face. The chieftain, making a tragical face, said ‘Really...’.

“I’m sorry I couldn’t be of any help.”

“No, it’s fine.... Is there something, some means to prevent it...?”

For this question too, Tokihara didn’t forget to make a sorrowful face, but his head was already thinking of a different matter.

According to the schedule, the students lead by the Queen should soon arrive at this Albadanba. The problem was whether or not the Monster Corps would really be allowed to stay in this country, but there was no need to think too hard about that. This Allied Nations was surprisingly open-minded. If Tokihara just mediated a little, a tribe somewhere would readily receive them. Only, Tokihara couldn’t afford to show up during their stay. He would instantly be exposed as a Japanese, speaking further, he would be exposed as a vampire because of the red eyes. That would absolutely happen if he was found by the Queen.

I will explore their future destination without showing myself and report it to the King.

And if it was possible, collecting the Queen’s blood and delivering it to the King.

Setting aside the first one anyway, the latter was a challenge. Even for the fact that the Pawns Akeno had entrusted to him were concealing themselves. Would it be possible to dye this Albadanba in the blood of war?

Well, what will be will be. It would be quite pitiful for the credulous chieftains in front of my eyes now though.

“UOOORYAAA———-!!”

A full body kick performed by Kyousuke who was in Stream Cross state bored into one of the tentacles clinging to the warship. But the tentacle, its thickness alone would be 2 to 3 meters, didn't even twitch by the crushing attack. Kyousuke made a sword hand and glared at that tentacle again.

“Rin, chop it with Cutter!”

“Roger that!”

The instant he swung down the raised sword hand, pressurized water emitted with diameter of barely 1 millimeter. No matter what kind of mollusk body it was, the tentacle couldn't kill the shock of the ultra-high pressured water current and was unsatisfyingly severed. To not let the Water Cutter damage other equipments on board, Rin quickly stopped it.

The severed tentacle wriggled on the deck and soon stopped moving. The thorns growing on the suction cups were scratching the deck.

“All right, one down!”

“Is this edible...?”

The heavy cruiser branch school and the maritime caravan sailing ship was currently being attacked by a kraken.

It was a sea monster you don't know well if it was a squid or an octopus. According to Selena's Memo, it was a descendant of the aquatic monster the Sea King directly gave birth to, but that kind of thing was trivial. It had a stupidly gigantic body, adding the length of its tentacles which by themselves were more than 50 meters, this side had to fight with those on board and sometimes in the sea as well, so they were forced into a considerably difficult battle. At first, Kaoruko had tried to tempt it, but while still didn't know well whether it was working or not, he was repelled by a tentacle and was sent flying. No, since he was sent flying, it probably was ineffective. Anyway, at the moment, they were fighting to protect the merchant ship which was entwined by the giant squid tentacles and was likely to sink at any moment now from the kraken.

Kyousuke and Rin had just finally chopped down one tentacle on the heavy cruiser branch school's deck.

This kraken looked to be considerably stubborn, it was stretching its tentacles to both the merchant ship and the heavy cruiser branch school. But size-wise, the heavy cruiser branch school would need the most difficult technique to sink, that or an iceberg. If one had to say, then it was the merchant ship that was in danger unless they protect it.

Ryuzaki had already performed «*Perfect Dragonization*» and was spraying breaths to the kraken from the sky. Not just Ryuzaki, Karasuma, Saruwatari, Harui, the students who were capable of flight had been attacking the main body of the kraken several times. People such as Okumura, Zeku and then Kensaki had already jumped over to the merchant ship's deck and started lopping off tentacles.

“Kyouzuke-kun, we too!”

“All right, let's go!”

Rearranging the leg bones in reversed joints, they lightly jumped over ten-odd meters between the ships. Kyouzuke and Rin, as it was, settled down on the merchant ship's deck.

“You came, Utsurogi!”

It was exactly at the moment Kensaki and the others cooperated and lopped off one of the giant squid tentacles.

“I'll help. How many tentacles remained?”

“As far as we can confirm, it's 12. But no one can tell.”

Kensaki's face which was rolling on the floor grimaced. Since leaving it there seemed like it would be trampled in an emergency, Kyouzuke gently placed it on a wooden box in a corner.

On the other hand, Rin who heard the number of tentacles groaned.

“Too many. Squid has only 10 tentacles, isn't it?”

“I think there was an octopus specimen with 96 legs at Shima Marineland.”

“Utsurogi, Himemizu, kraken is neither a squid nor an octopus in the first place debu.”

Several tentacles were still persistently sticking to the heavy cruiser branch school. But since quite a lot war potential remained over there, there would be

no need to worry. While thinking so, the prime example of a reliable man, Goubayashi jumped out of the cabin. A mantle trailing behind him, his body clad in golden fighting spirit.

A tentacle extended in a slapping down motion, receiving that directly from the front, he grabbed it with both arms and then forcibly tore it apart.

Furthermore, he did a backward roundhouse kick, bisecting another approaching tentacle. Was it really because of that fighting spirit that he managed to sever that mollusk body with a crushing attack, or else was it one caused by the extraordinary physical ability of an ogre?

Looking closely, Kyouzuke noticed that Shokuzura who didn't show any individuality other than that intense appearance so far was unusually standing on the deck in high spirit.

“My tentacles and your tentacles.... Let's see which one of us is on top with this battle!!”

Immediately after that, Shokuzura Nadehiko ate a tentacle punch and flew into the sea. Since there were the underwater troops composed of the Uozumi siblings and the sahagins, he would probably get saved soon. Limited to this time, Sugiura Aya – normally not a combat personnel – had also turned support from within the sea.

The tentacles sticking to the heavy cruiser branch school were entirely chopped off by Goubayashi. Regaining her freedom, the branch school started turning around, directing the warship's bow to the kraken. Goblins came out from the cabin and stationed at the gun turrets.

Having said that, the machine guns' ammunition was limited. They probably could only make restraining shots for crisis avoidance and not right now.

The aerial unit was continuing a good fight as well. Karasuma, Harui, Saruwatari, all members were capable of using wind attribute spirit magic. Starting from «*Wind Cutter*», attack magic of wind attribute which specialized in cutting, could deal quite a telling blow to the kraken. Ryuzaki's flame throwing was effective as well. As for Kaminari, a blitzkrieg – namely, lightning war – was impossible, but with Nekomiya riding on her head, they slipped through the tentacles, repeating hit-and-run attacks.

“Let’s go! Crystallization of my youth!”

Saruwatari faced both palms together and accumulated wind energy. When he brandished it greatly in the air like baseball pitch, the wind magical power accumulated into a spherical shape vigorously flew out.

“Blast Blaster!!”

It was wind blades compressed into a sphere. It bit a hole in the kraken’s ‘belly’, but it couldn’t quite penetrate it. The meat was too thick.

“Saruwatari, what’s that just now?”

Harui sent chilling eyes at Saruwatari.

“Crystallization of my youth.... It’s magic ball!”

“Ah, yeah.... Right...”

Harui didn’t retort any further.

As expected, if it’s just bringing down the kraken, it would be faster to make concentrated attack at the head or belly that was packed with critical organs like the brain and such, but there were many students who couldn’t fly so that was difficult. Kyousuke and company had no choice but to steadily peel off the tentacle clinging to the merchant ship.

“I mean, what happened to Hino? Won’t it be faster if you combine with Hino?”

While hitting a tentacle with her sword, Kensaki shouted. Kyousuke launched Water Cutter at the tentacle clinging to the mast.

“Akira is still in bed with seasickness, really seasickness this time!”

“Then Rin! Rin can fly too!”

“Water is insufficient! We’ll be head first to the sea if it ran out!”

Not something they could have their way with at all.

“There are guys who haven’t come out yet. Harao! If there’s his telekinesis!”

“Sleeping.”

“How about Kinogasa! Let’s cover the tentacles in mushrooms with his spores!”

“Since he’ll be all wrinkled if he falls in the sea, he’s too scared to come out.”

“What about Yukinoshita! Encase it in ice with Freeze Beam!”

“Please pardon her since the weather is so hot that she’s half-melted.”

Even assuming the eternally sleeping Harao Masaki was out of the question, there were also species that couldn’t show their full potential due to the environment such as Kinogasa the matango or Yukinoshita the snow woman, so a naval battle was quite a troublesome thing. Akira being put to bed as well, was because he might very well die if he was to fall into the sea when they made him come out in such a bad condition.

Furthermore, Yukinoshita Ryouka who reincarnated as a snow woman was seen as being endowed with considerable potential, but the person herself had a fatal problem in her personality and didn’t come out to the front line much. Since she was the ‘*heated*’ type of girl who encouraged herself when making a stand against predicaments or adversities, when unskillfully got into a pinch, she would arbitrarily get heated and arbitrarily melted. Basically useless.

“So—sorry I’m late!”

Together with that voice, a girl tumbled out of the cabin.

“Sakuma Sachiko has come to the front line together with Inugami-san!”

It was Sakuma the succubus. And accompanying her, Inugami – already transformed to a wolf – jumped out on the deck. After confirming that there was no tentacles clinging to the branch school, Inugami jumped over to the merchant ship over here together with Goubayashi. As for Sakuma, she spread her wings and went to assist the air battle group.

Akai didn’t come out. Forcing her who hadn’t sucked blood was just a little impossible at the moment.

“The Uozumi siblings are currently going around cutting the remaining tentacle in the sea.”

While tearing apart one tentacle, Goubayashi said so.

“Once we cut off every tentacle, we will burn down the main body in one go with Sakuma’s magic. Utsurogi, you’re good to go?”

“Ehh, me?”

Kyousuke reflexively turned around and asked.

“I heard from Hakuba. He said there is a tactic of strengthening Sakuma’s

magic with «*Characteristics Amplification*». Certainly it was Giant Burst...”

“It’s Big Burst...”

As a son of a temple, Goubayashi looked to be unrelated to worldly desires, but had he really noticed the evil meaning Hakuba had loaded?

“Eh, Kyouzuke-kun. I heard that for the first time. What is it? What’s that about Saa-chan big bust?”

“Rin.... You’re straight as always...”

“Fuu, Utsurogi. That’s one of Rin’s good points.”

The one who crossed their arms and proudly said a misplaced comment for some reason was Kensaki.

Anyway, attacking by amplifying Sakuma magic offensive ability with Kyouzuke’s power was called Big Burst. Specifically speaking, it needed not to be Sakuma, even other students attack magic worked as well, but with Kogane gone, the one who had the strongest magic attack was Sakuma, so it was inevitably calculated that they could bring out the most firepower by buffing Sakuma.

“I see I see.”

It was instantly transmitted to Rin. It was one of the conveniences of the combine state.

“I suddenly thought of this Kyouzuke-kun, will the effect of «*Temptation*» be amplified as well when using «*Characteristics Amplification*» on Saa-chan or Kaoruko-chan?”

“Yes? Well, it will? I have never seen Sakuma use «*Temptation*» though.”

“Fumu—...”

Rin leaked out some kind of voice. Kyouzuke raised his face and watch the air battle group.

The kraken already had no tentacles left to intercept the air battle group. Probably the remaining legs were in combat with the Uozumis in the sea. Magics and breaths aiming at the belly which became defenseless exploded one after another. It seemed likely they could defeat it even if he left it alone.

“Say, are you going to shout the technique’s name to bring out the spirit?”

“Eh, umm. It’s nothing much...?”

“Then let’s shout.”

“Su—sure...”

Rin said much too indifferently. Kyouzuke cleared his throat a little and called out to Sakuma who was flying in the air.

“Sa—Sakuma! Let’s use Bi ... Big Burst!!”

Even though it never means to be indecent, this is way too embarrassing to speak. What kinda play is this?

Flying in the air, Sakuma immediately noticed that voice and flew over to the merchant ship. She was making an excessively happy face.

“Understood, Utsurogi-kun! Let’s go with Big Burst!”

“I don’t understand well, but can that Big Burst bring down that kraken?”

Since Kensaki came along and joined the conversation with an appearance that she absolutely didn’t notice at all, Kyouzuke started holding his head.

“Ah, eh, umm, Himemizu-san. I will borrow Utsurogi-kun’s power.”

“Since Kyouzuke-kun is not mine, please borrow as much as you want.”

“Utsurogi-kun, please treat me well!”

For some reason, Sakuma’s cheeks blushed and she became all smiley.

It could have been his imagination, but recently, Kyouzuke felt like she had strangely made a breakthrough somehow. He didn’t quite understand what breakthrough it was, but should he call it defiance or positivity? Well, it was a good thing either way.

Since Sakuma turned her back over here and started chanting, Kyouzuke’s hands started to wander. It was because of a very difficult problem of where to put his hands. As the result of thoroughly hesitating, Kyouzuke, like last time, finally touched her shoulders.

“Uoo, Saa-chan’s shoulders, so soft.”

Even the words Kyouzuke had made sure not to so much as think about, Rin had spoken them. Sakuma’s temperature raised a little.

“Everyone avoid it! Utsurogi and Sakuma is using Big Bursstt!!”

Kensaki's big voice echoed, everyone who had joined in the air attack to the kraken main body greatly spread out.

"Sakuma, I think you knew but please make sure not to break this ship."
"Yeah, I know...!"

Finishing chanting, Sakuma directed the gathered magical power to the kraken. Black flame greatly flared up from her palms, making a sinister claw-like shape.

"Evil Flare - Big Burst-!!"

Together with Sakuma's shout, brutal claws of wicked flame was released. As if they were separate living things itself, 5 claws cut, surged through the air and swallowed the white and soft body of the kraken. That greatly bit into the kraken's abdomen which was full of wounds from the repeated attacks of the air battle unit so far, several seconds later, it exploded.

The death agony didn't echo. In exchange was sound of explosion. The body of the kraken which was greatly bursted open slowly collapsed on top of the ocean, raising a water column.

"All, all right...!"

Sakuma clenched both fists and expressed her joy.

"Bravo!"

Rin too sent words of praise to Sakuma.

Kyousuke greatly sighed. The combat ability of everyone in the class was increasing and it wasn't an especially hard fight, but the opponent was troublesome. As expected, fighting with this big a giant sea monster might go hand in hand with hardship.

"...Ooh, has it ended?"

Welkano-shi who had withdrawn to the cabin suddenly showed his face and said so.

"...Yes, the ship too is protected without getting any big damage."

The one answered him was Goubayashi. His tone was polite, but since he hadn't canceled the fighting spirit, the intimidating atmosphere was still

amazing.

“There’re not so many adventurers capable enough to repulse a kraken on the sea. Truly as expected of you.”

It was worn-out flattery, but it didn’t feel bad at all to hear it. Welkano-shi showing his gratitude was probably the truth, but he was still putting some distance between them. It was reasonable to be scared when being show this much power. Only Remy was peeping her face out a little from the cabin, but as expected, other merchants showed no signs of coming out at all.

“Then we will return. Let’s set sail again once things calmed down.”

Probably judging that overstaying on this deck would just scare the other party, Goubayashi said so and waved his hand to the aerial unit. It was easy to jump from the heavy cruiser branch school to the merchant ship because the branch school’s deck was higher, but it wouldn’t go well when going the opposite way. They needed to have Kaminari and Ryuzaki properly carry them.

“As expected, it’s scary looking from humans’ perspective.”

Muttered Rin.

“Well, I am also human though.”

“Yeah.... From Welkano-san group’s perspective, we’re really just ordinary monsters...”

Sakuma nodded to Rin’s words.

Not that it was a particularly heavy mood, but neither did it feel good to feel the depth of the ditch between them. As a matter of fact, Kyouzuke was thinking about clearing the maritime caravan merchants’ wariness with the matter this time and having them share blood for Akai. But as expected, the prospect was dim.

“I’m also thinking the same thing though...”

In the meantime, Kaminari and Ryuzaki descended on the merchant ship’s deck. Riding on their back, Kyouzuke and the others was going back to the heavy cruiser branch school. Looking back down, the merchants had finally came out of the cabin and started checking for any damage to the ship.

At that time, Kyousuke suddenly heard a scream coming from below. It was a throaty scream of a man.

What happened? As he thought so and once again turned his gaze back, he heard a girl's voice shouting this:

“Not good! I forgot my head again!”

Riding on Kaminari Totoha's back, the headless public morals committee member panicked.

At the time of being attacked by the kraken, they were thinking if they would have to fight sea monsters like this several times. But since then, the heavy cruiser branch school and the merchant ship crossed the sea favorably without meeting any big obstacle.

In the meantime, they tried to deliver cooking using kraken legs or caught fishes dried overnight to the merchant ship, but those people didn't show any sign of opening their heart at all. Speaking strongly, it was only the half elf Remy who showed interest in the heavy cruiser branch school, but Welkano-shi didn't allow her to cross over to the ship over here.

Only, several days before arriving at Albadanba, the students of 2nd year class 4 heard a very interesting story from Remy.

It was information such as what kind of monster raw material was being traded for a high price at Albadanba. They didn't think about trying to cut up their own body to sell, but if it was something they could produce, there was no method not to prepare it.

Kumosaki who heard that arachne threads were especially popular was diligently producing threads. Kinogasa as well, desperately launched spores, covering the home garden in mushrooms and was completely chewed out by Hanazono.

Kuremori made little music boxes using the surplus material, Gofunkawahara and the goblins with dexterous fingers as well, were making wood carving handicrafts and killing time.

Naturally, there were also students who were going nuts over the video games confiscated at the old castle and didn't think about such a thing, there were also students who just vacantly gazed at the horizon, unchanged from

usual, and if there were students who enjoyed fishing, then there were also students who were enthused over drying those.

With this and that, about 2 weeks had passed. It was time when about 2 months and a week had passed since they came over to this world.

While each person had their fill of the boat trip in their own way, they finally arrived at the Maritime United Nations Albadanba.

Chapter 50 — Blood Crave Illness

When that gigantic ship showed itself off the coast, Delf – the westernmost island of Albadanba – went into a little uproar.

The wooden sailing ship which was crossing the sea and approaching raised the flag of the merchant fleet coming from the continent in the North. But the ships of the merchant fleet that the islanders knew well was all but one, and not a single islander knew of the black ship made of steel running behind it. First of all, the men who went out fishing noticed that, the children going out to play noticed that, they went to call the chieftain of Delf and Tokihara the accountant.

The chieftain was delighted that the merchant ships had arrived at Albadanba although they were considerably later than scheduled, next, he was doubtful that there was only one merchant ship and that there was a black ship running behind it. Tokihara said that that too was probably one of the merchant ships and he was going to convey this matter to chieftains of other islands in order to start trading with the merchant fleet, then he left the beach.

As always, a small boat descended from the merchant ship anchored offshore, Welkano – leader of the merchant fleet – came along to this beach. He was together with the half elf Remy whom he loved like his grandchild, but the fact that an unfamiliar dragonewt was further mixed in solidified the islanders where they stood.

Dragonewt was a kind of half-dragon half-human monster that was confirmed to be living on the continent. Said to be descendants of the Dragon King who once dominated the continent, they wielded terrifying power and owned high intelligence, therefore interaction with humans wasn't impossible, but such oddballs were few and far between.

The chieftain too was once a warrior who set sail on the sea in his youth, he had heard about the dragonewts from the humans of the continent several times. Although mostly refusing to interact with humans, dragonewt was an intellectual tribe. Indeed he thought it was unusual, but if speaking of whether there was no such thing at all, then it wasn't an impossible story.

“Greetings, long time no see. Chieftain Bergel.”

Welkano touched both arms on his left and right shoulders, then slowly bowed according to the tribal ceremony and greeted the chieftain.

“It’s best of all that you’re in good health. Welkano. But this time has become quite strange.”

Children of the island, brimming with curiosity, at once started to swarm around the dragonewt they saw for the first time. Some children, ignorant of fear, pulled his tail or poke his scales, then was beaten up big time by their parents whose face was turning blue.

The dragon man scrunched up his face and lightly waved his hand. Perhaps that was his broad smile. After that, the dragonewt started discussing something with Remy.

“First, about the fact that the ships of the merchant fleet was less than usual...”

While his mind was still worrying about the dragon man, the chieftain enquired. Welkano made a grim face.

“That was a very regretful thing. As a matter of fact, the merchant fleet has encountered a storm.”

He said it with the same tone as usual, but the chieftain wouldn’t be the chieftain if he wasn’t able to comprehend words past that.

“Really.... That’s very serious.”

Nevertheless, even just one ship managed to reach this place was still something to be grateful for. The chieftain also performed a tribal style bow. Next, the chieftain turned his gaze toward the giant black ship anchored offshore.

Even the chieftain had never seen that kind of ship before. He had heard story of magic ship that relied on neither wind nor human power in the Empire, so it was probably that kind of thing? It was big enough to make his perspective went amiss even just by looking from this beach. The size had to be close to several time the merchant ship.

Welkano also understood what was beyond the chieftain’s line of sight. He

immediately nodded and gave an explanation.

“That is Ryuzaki, this person here and his group’s ship.”

Following Welkano’s introduction, the dragonewt similarly put both hands on his shoulders and bowed, directing a tribal style greeting at the chieftain.

“Nice to meet you, chieftain Bergel. I have heard that you are serving as the chairman of Albadanba Chieftain Parliament this time.”

“Ah, ahh, no. The chairman of the Chieftain Parliament follows a rotation system. It doesn’t mean I have any special power within this allied nations.”

The chieftain flinched a little due to the dragonewt’s greetings with words much more fluent than he expected.

The dragonewt gave his name as Ryuzaki. Apparently, he was leading many monsters living on that ship, they guarded Welkano group on the way and came along to this Albadanba. He had especially said that there was no ill will, but the words that many monsters were living on that ship didn’t quite strike home for the chieftain.

Probably not because he said there was no ill will. Besides, it looked like Welkano had also put a certain amount of trust in them. That meant the other party was monsters, but was worthy of confidence. The chieftain was probably thinking so. The tribe living on Delf Island had quite an open mindset even within Albadanba. They could accept well things from outside world.

“We were saved by them when being attacked by a kraken at sea as well.”

When Welkano said so, Ryuzaki looked at him, seemingly a little surprised. The chieftain didn’t know till the meaning of that expression though.

“If you protected Welkano group, you’re our brothers. We shall welcome you, Ryuzaki.”

“Ah, right.... Yes. My thanks, chieftain Bergel.”

Ryuzaki, making a somehow anticlimactic expression, once again bowed. Courtesy was also well-understood.

When Welkano continued to discuss about future schedule with the chieftain, chieftains of other tribes that was living relatively nearby came along. Since Albadanba wasn’t narrow at all, it should take an entire day to call the chieftain

of distant islands.

The trade fair with the maritime caravan would be tomorrow at the soonest, taking into account the preparation period, it should be held from the day after tomorrow. Chieftains of other tribes as well, were coming along perfectly bored even now. Magic stones or marine products which were going to become trade goods were probably being prepared and carried by youngsters of the tribes.

“Chieftain Bergel, there are goods we’ve prepared as well so if you don’t mind.”

“Ahh, I appreciate it. Although Welkano-dono has met some misfortune, it’s still quite desolate if the trade goods become too few.”

The trade with the merchant fleet of the continent was an important event even in Albadanba which was held only twice a year. Since the merchandise would become considerably less when it became only one ship worth, he had imagined that the trade fair was going to become quite modest. At that time, because the monsters said that they were going to prepare something, he was quite grateful for it even if they could just prepare the appearance alone.

After that, he was informed by Ryuzaki of their wish to stay in Albadanba for a little while. Although it was impossible to give Albadanba’s consensus as a chieftain, for now, he could still give out permission as Delf Island.

“However, you said monsters, but what kind of things there are?”

The chieftain inclined his head. Ryuzaki was at a loss for words for a bit.

If speaking of monsters in this Albadanba, many of those inhabited the sea, that is to say, the majority of those were fishmen, kraken, sea serpent, *etc.* On Albadanba’s islands, there was only a large type carnivorous beasts called Yaguara, creatures that could be called monsters didn’t live there.

Sometime ago, the bunch called the Continent Rare Organism Scrivener Team had come to visit Albadanba together with the merchant fleet. According to those guys, the Yaguara could also be classified as magic beasts in a broad sense, but the chieftain at least, had never recognized the Yaguara as that kind of existence.

The one who spoke up there was Remy who had remained silent so far.

“Demi-human type monsters such as gillman, goblin and orc. Undead

monsters such as skeleton and dullahan. Sacred beast, magic beast type monsters like unicorn and cait sith. It's an alliance by various monsters.”
“Hooou.”

A composition much more varied than he thought, the chieftain leaked a voice of admiration.

“I will ask it just in case, but there's no monsters that will eat humans?”
“Ahh, that's oka———“

The moment he started speaking, Ryuzaki words got stuck. But he immediately shook his head.

“It's okay, chieftain Bergel. There's no monster among our friends who want to kill and eat human.”

“That's fine then. Just recently, one child had gone missing...”

“I, I see.... That is worrisome.”

Ryuzaki's expression turned complicated for a moment. Both Welkano and Remy looked at him with their respective expressions, but what kind of implications those had were unknown to the chieftain.

The dragonewt, Ryuzaki Kunihiro had a vampire friend called Akai Asuka and that vampire was looking for human's blood. That was precisely why Ryuzaki hesitated in choosing his words earlier, and it was the same reason why Welkano and Remy were looking at him.

Within Ryuzaki's expression was something like «*At this rate, it's going to be difficult to give some kind of reason to ask for blood*», but naturally, the chieftain didn't have the kind of power to let him understand all that.

After a little while, Ryuzaki returned to the heavy cruiser branch school anchored offshore. Because the landing permission was easily gotten, the students ate quite an anticlimax. The students, who had started to completely yearn for land during these nearly 2 weeks voyage at sea, clung to Kaminari Totoha the thunderbird, or took down the boats and prepared to head to the beach.

“Oi, Akira, you okay? We arrived at Albadanba?”

“Ah, right.... Have we finally arrived...? Uuu...”

Hino Akira the Wisp was groggy. The thermal power made up his body was obviously weak at a glance.

“Sorry, Kyousuke.... Can you take out the motion sickness bag...”

“Is—is there such a thing? No, in the first place, you can vomit...”

“F—feel like I’m going to vomit due to motion sickness at anytime now....

Uuuu...”

Bupaa, a large amount of white ashes gushed out from the wisp’s body.

“Uoo...”

“So—sorry. Kyousuke, this is, unsightly...”

“No, it’s fine since it’s not unsightly, visually speaking.... Really, is this vomit...?”

Kyousuke cleaned up the scattered ashes with a broom placed in the corner of the room.

“Well, since we’re going to set sail again after a while.... It may be a short stay, but it’s the long-awaited southern island. Let’s fully enjoy it.”

“That, that’s right.... Southern island...”

Akira, floating unsteadily, said such a thing.

“Has, other students ... already landed?”

“Rin is waiting. And then Sakuma is at Akai’s place.”

“Akai’s...”

“Right.”

Kyousuke nodded.

Even now, Akai was still shutting herself in her room, not trying to disembark.

As a matter of fact, her condition had worsen again these past few days, the times she showed up in the dining room had also lessen. Either way, this seemed to be because she hadn't been sucking blood.

The classmates were also worrying about Akai in their own way, the Uozumi siblings caught a sea turtle and hand it over to Sugiura, Sugiura using the meat of that sea turtle to make steak, cooked to rare, a special menu just for Akai. It appeared that she also extracted its blood, put it in a bottle and let Akai drink it, but Akai's condition didn't show any improvement at all.

Part of the classmates were thinking about a method to get blood from humans, but whatever methods they could think of only seemed to result in harming the humans' trust, so they didn't carry them out.

As for Sakuma and Kaoruko, judging from the brooding expression they sometimes made, the girls too, was probably considering making use of the power of «*Temptation*» and have the humans *donate* some blood.

Kyousuke, matching the really slow flying pace of Akira, came out to the corridor. As they were about to head to the deck where Rin was waiting, they saw unexpected students waiting in the corridor.

“What's this, isn't this Harui and Hebtsuka?”

Harui the harpy and Hebtsuka the Lamia.

When speaking of Queen Akai's entourage, it was these two people that felt strangely nostalgic somehow. These two looked at Kyousuke group direction but they instantly lost interest and looked away, showing a bored look.

“You two.... What are you doing?”

“Waiting. For Asuka.”

Akira's words were answered by Harui's strangely harsh tone.

Waiting, they said, but the place the two were standing was quite a bit distant from Akai's bedroom. Kyousuke couldn't comprehend why there was even a tinge of aggressiveness in her words. But because he couldn't understand, he exercised his brains and let his imagination swim.

“You seem to be in quite a bad mood.”

Hino Akira, ignorant of fear, said so fearlessly.

“Hah, what do YOU know!”

“No, I know. I think you’re dissatisfied that Akai didn’t rely on you.”

When Akira lightly said that, the two people froze. Kyousuke inclined his head.

“What kind of thing is ... is it better if I don’t asked?”

“Well, Kyousuke, if you’re considering the subtleties of their heart, I won’t say anymore than this.”

Twitch, Harui’s face cramped. She was going to say something, but just at that time, the door of a room a bit further away opened. Akai Asuka and Sakuma Sachiko appeared. Harui and Hebetsuka, first made a worried expression, then instantly erased that.

“Asuka...”

Looking at the dead tired appearance of Akai, Hebetsuka murmured.

Akai Asuka’s complexion was absolutely bad. Already white originally, now Akai’s skin went past white to pale. The smooth whiteness quite like wax itself was ghastly vivid. Just like that of the dead.

If this was the symptom due to lack of blood, why had she remained silent until this point?

“Ah, Utsurogi-kun. Harui-san and Hebetsuka-san too.”

As Akai noticed this place when hearing Sakuma’s voice, she raised her face.

“.....Ahh.”

Saying just that, she casted her eyes down again, not trying to speak anything more in particular.

“Asuka, you all right?”

“...I’m tired, but okay.”

She answered Harui’s words without breaking her usual tone as much as possible.

“...There’s Utsurogi, and Hino too. Just, right.”

As it was, she turned her gaze toward Kyousuke group.

“...There’s something I want to about regarding this state to Utsurogi as well.”

“Sure, I don’t really mind but...”

“Oi Asuka.”

As Kyouzuke was giving his answer, Harui’s cold voice echoed from behind.

“What was that?”

“Harui...”

“I’m not saying not to rely on Sakuma or Utsurogi or anything, but why every-time there’s such an important story, you never talked to us about it? What is this? Asuka, are we so unreliable to you?”

Her words were strangely thorny. If taking the meaning of her words as is, then it was certainly as Akira had said. Kyouzuke finally understood.

“We, aren’t we friends?”

These two had been Akai Asuka’s followers since the human days. At least the surroundings had recognized it that way. But, *‘followers’* was a little malicious way of calling, at least for the girls, it was *‘friendship’*. Since there might have been a hierarchical relationship when looking from the side, it might be a fact that Harui and Hebetsuka had resigned themselves to that though.

Nevertheless, Harui and Hebetsuka might have been shock that Akai had been hiding the fact that she was a vampire, and that it wasn’t them she confided in first but Sakuma. Akai relied on Sakuma and Kaoruko, but at least, she didn’t rely on Harui and Hebetsuka. That might have been shocking to them.

Did she not think that she would be told such a thing? Akai was showing a surprised look.

“Harui...”

“Well, it’s fine though. I’ll be going ahead.”

Saying so, Harui turned her back to Akai and went up the stairs leading to the deck.

“Ah, oi, Harui!”

Hebetsuka raised her voice and chased after Harui.

Akai too chased after her with her gazed, but instantly turned back to

Kyousuke direction.

“...Well then, Utsurogi. It’s about my present state, but,”

Even though she said that so lightly, Kyousuke was surprised.

“Is it okay not to chase after Harui?”

“I want to talk to you first.... Ahh, Sachi, sorry. It’s fine already...”

Akai who was being supported by Sakuma so far, said so and barely stood in the corridor with her own two legs.

She was staggering a bit, but the way she stood was firm beyond expectation. While repeated rough breathing, she scratched the black hair stuck on her forehead along with sweats.

“Blood crave illness.... That’s what it’s called. It’s my present condition.”

“Blood crave illness...?”

“Yes.... Without human blood intake for a long time, it will become like this...”

What is called ‘*vampire*’ in Kyousuke’s world is a species that obtained power with a special energy flowing in blood. That energy is very similar to magical power, it is something like spiritual gene, taking different form in each individual. Using the part of the same structure within the spiritual gene, the owner can give out command to their kins.

Because Akai’s blood had that same structure which received orders from the King’s spiritual gene, Kyousuke, as Akai’s kin, had that same structure in his spiritual gene as well.

Vampires are once ordinary humans. They are a species that was made to be able to flow the spiritual gene within their blood through external means. That is inherited by children who are born between vampire parents as well, but because the spiritual gene is something that humans aren’t supposed to have originally, some structural abnormality was born.

When the spiritual gene is consumed by life activities and exercising their power, it stayed in their blood. So to speak, it is the energy’s cadaver. No matter how that circulated, it is impossible for the vampires’ internal organs — which is originally not much different from humans — to purify that. Therefore, it is necessary to take in pure blood of humans, unmixed with the energy’s

cadaver.

Do not taking in blood for a long period and your blood will be filled with sedimented energy's cadaver. That is the blood crave illness.

"I understand that, but..."

Kyousuke scratched his cheek.

"WHY did you tell me all that?"

Asuka next spoke up a very surprising comment.

"If I remain to be unable to suck blood like this, I may have to temporarily make you return the blood, that's why."

You can do that? Kyousuke thought.

Chapter 51 — Curiosity Kill the Dog

“Uoo—, they’re really monsters!”

“Incredible—!”

“Ne~, is it real!? Is this tail real!?”

Children are creatures that know no fear, they started squashing the students of 2nd year class 4 in the blink of an eye. The especially popular ones were Hakuba and Nekomiya. Speaking of ‘squashed’, it was more than just metaphorical for Nekomiya whose height was lower than that of children. Being a black cat wearing leather boots, donning a vest, she was tremendously popular among the children.

“Hahaha, you guys. No matter how charming I am, this is ... ah, no, please wait. Whiskers and tail are not things to pull? Ye—eow! Children these days don’t know any moderation ... ahh, wait ... hey! Please stop that!”

On the other hand, not a single child approached Okumura and Kensaki whose appearance was eerie. Okumura, for his part, didn’t even show any sign of caring about it, but Kensaki was frankly shocked. As she almost brought her head to the brats during her shock, she was yelled at strongly and took distance from the children again.

Other classmates had come down to the beach as well, each one was doing their own things. Sugiura immediately started a BBQ, she was grilling the fished dried on the ship. Hanazono also supplied vegetables. Kinogasa also supplied the mushrooms he had been taking care of, or tried to at least, but Hanazono resolutely ignored him.

“Um—u, what’s this...”

“It’s a music box. Music flows when you open it.”

“Fumu, what about this?”

“That’s clothes knitted with my threads.”

“This sculpture is wonderful. How much will the exchange rate be?”

“That’s Kagoi the gargoyle. He’s not for sale.”

Slipping in the merchandise Welkano — the maritime caravan — brought in,

were sale items the students had lined up as well. The thing this time was similar to the unveiling of commodities to be sold in the trade fair at a later date, the continuously gathering chieftains of each tribe seemed very interested in these.

Among the things the students were selling, the chieftains paid especial attention to the rare vegetables Hanazono brought in, Arachne's threads Kumosaki prepared, Kuremori's music boxes, handicrafts Gofunkawahara and Kahara made, well, those and Kagoi-kun. Naturally, in terms of quality, the goods Welkano brought were overwhelmingly more outstanding, but since his fleet had mostly sunk anyway, as substitutes, the students' goods also received considerable interest.

"Understand? You guys! The time you're young happens only once! In other words, it's youth! And youth is baseball! I'm going to teach baseball to you guys now! This is the bat and ball I prepared!"

"Saruwatari, the children froze."

"Uoo, get fired up! Hot! But just baseball is not youth! I'm going to teach everyone the essence of volleyball! Speaking of the beach, it has to be volleyball! It's decided wisdom!"

"Yukinoshita, you're melting."

Part of the exercise members were devoting themselves to missionary work.

"It's a good trend."

Gazing at those scene, Goubayashi muttered. Ryuzaki nodded too.

The participation to the trade fair was something Ryuzaki had proposed to Welkano previously. They were forced to abandon the caterpillar unit, but Ryuzaki didn't want to give up the heavy cruiser branch school. After going around to the east side of the continent, they would need to go on land again. So he thought to request the Southern Commerce Guild to obtain the material to make the caterpillar unit again.

But gathering supplies through the guild needed money. Ryuzaki was trying to obtain money in the trade fair this time and immediately hand it over to Welkano as materials procurement fee.

Naturally, it wasn't his only purpose.

“Because I want to get blood for Asuka from them somehow.”

The conclusion he got at the end of his thorough thinking was this: *Sooner or later we will need to get blood from human even if we have to use every single trick or method available. Then it's better to have these people who are relatively friendly toward monsters offer blood in good faith.*

Only, it was a highly difficult request to make at the first meeting. He was going to dispel the tension of the chieftain of each tribe and the children gathered here, making it easier to negotiate. He might be thinking too much, but there's nothing overcautious about this matter, probably.

While many students were deepening the cultural exchange with the islanders, one girl was looking around the surroundings restlessly at the place slightly apart.

It was the outlaw delinquent girl, Inugami Hibiki the werewolf. Unlike other students, she didn't turn into a monster by passing through the Transference Denaturation Gate. She was natural born werewolf.

“Inugami-san, what's wrong?”

After unloading her luggage from the merchant ship, Remy called out to Inugami whose appearance clearly indicated her vigilance of something. Inugami took a glance at Remy, twitched her nose and said:

“There's an unpleasant smell.”

“Unpleasant smell?”

“Uh huh...”

Saying so, Inugami started toward Ryuzaki.

“Inugami?”

“Careful, Ryuzaki. There may be vampire on this island.”

“What...?”

In the direction Inugami was looking when she said that spread a dense forest.

The sun was setting, darkness was swallowing the forest. The look in her eyes was one of glaring at the bitter enemy of the clan itself. The smell that Inugami perceived wasn't just a mere vampire. It's the *'blood clan'*. As long as the enemy

had the combat power of Pawn-class at least, there would be few students who could cope with them.

However, this wasn't a wide island at all. Even if a vampire was lurking, it wasn't a place to hide for so long.

Perhaps the vampires concealed themselves by slipping into the humans. Ryuzaki made a grim face, then same as Inugami, glared at the dense forest.

"Please wait, Akai."

Before moving the story along, Akira cut in.

"We only know vaguely about the ability Akai's blood have. Just within the extent you know is just, please explain more in order."

Sakuma repeatedly nodded at his words. It was probably something bothering her as well.

Fuu, sighed, while scratching the hair that had stuck to her forehead again, Akai said:

"Explanation ... is it? There are many things I was taught by my parents since I was born so..."

With that opening, she started to explain again.

"The spiritual gene, energy body that flows in the blood, this is the '*vampire factor*' that remake a human into a vampire. Let's unify the way to call it as this from now on."

Vampires like Akai aren't the kind to increase their comrades by biting humans, but they can turn someone into a vampire by letting their own vampire factor flow in the blood of the target. Vampires born by this method had the lowest position within the blood clan. These were the Pawns. In the former world, there existed human sympathizers who believed in Akai's blood clan and supported the vampires' society, among those, the ones with especially high contribution to the blood clan were chosen and turned into Pawns. Pouring the factor into a human's blood is not something that can be done so easily. It is something similar to a ritual, necessary preparation has to be done in advance.

This isn't limited to turning into Pawns. According to the blood clan's plan, the action of '*sharing blood*' that Akai was supposed to have done to the students corresponded to this: pouring one's factor to the target's blood. The kind of monsters originally without any body fluids — including blood — can largely omit the ritual's procedure. Namely, Kyouzuke the skeleton, Akira the wisp, Kagoi the gargoyle, *etc.*

And then, the effects of giving the vampire factor is tremendous. Such as simple rise in physical ability, high speed regeneration, etc., even the case of ordinary human turning into a Pawn brought immeasurable benefits. Furthermore, children born between fellow vampires can pile up the composition, giving birth to stronger factor. Depending on the trait of the factor, they were divided into Knight-type, Bishop-type, Rook-type, and the strongest vampire in each era became the Queen.

"Asuka-chan.... You're really amazing, aren't you?"
"Well yeah."

Akai easily said so.
But all these factors originated from the '*King*', the vampires couldn't oppose the King who held that original factor.

"Something about that '*King*' is bothering me."
Kyouzuke raised his hand.

"What do you mean by '*holding the original factor*'? Is it exactly the same thing as the very first individual who turned into a Pawn?"

"I also don't know well."

"You don't know?"

"The first vampire of my blood clan.... The true ancestor, if he or she made a child, then does that child inherits the original factor, or is it not original at the point the blood is mixed? I don't quite understand."

Supposing it was the later case, then the original factor holder had to be an unthinkable aged person. And from the fact that he called himself King and a little girl of each era Queen, an unthinkable lolicon. [Note]

Since vampire had an image of living eternally, it wasn't something to be surprised about though.

And then, another demerit existed for existences other than the King, '*Blood Crave illness*'. This '*Blood Crave illness*' was definitely the reason vampires were vampires, precisely because of the Blood Crave illness broke out that they could be called vampires.

The vampire factor circulates in the body together with blood, its power consumed by life activities or exercising one's ability and return to ground state. The factor in ground state is something like waste products, it produces a bad condition when allowed to accumulate in one's body. The symptoms it caused was similar to uremia. This is the Blood Crave illness.

To cancel the Blood Crave illness, there's nothing to be done but returning the factors in ground state to excited state once again.

There are two methods. One, securing fresh blood. By flowing blood unmixed with factor, one can activate the factors, increase them. Since the increased factors are in the excited state, new blood can supply factors in fresh condition. Another method is to wait for the passage of time. But as mentioned previously, factors in ground state are waste products. Moreover, their power is also consumed by life activities. Since factors consume their power and return to ground state at a faster rate than them becoming excited state, this method is substantially unusable.

Akai had been talking fluently, but it was steadily getting harder to understand.

"Is it like dialysis?"

So said Akira.

"Yes. Then, anyone who has the vampire factor in their body fluids and medically performs life activities will have this Blood Crave illness."

"Me too?"

"Sachi too. And the only solution to it is to suck blood of the same kind and adjust the factors."

That was probably one of the reasons Akai didn't want to share blood with other students.

And it was also one of the reasons Akai had reluctantly given out blood to Kyousuke. The reason why she had expressly attached '*medically*' before '*life*

activities' had to be because Kyousuke's life activities were neither due to internal organs nor blood circulation. Kyousuke, a skeleton as he was, didn't get Blood Crave illness.

How he temporarily lose the power of blood by continuous usage of Phase 3 ability was the same situation as Blood Crave illness. However, Kyousuke didn't receive the adverse effects of the factors in ground state. He could wait for the factors to return to excited state by the passage of time. It was that kind of mechanism.

For now, he understood the circumstances.

"If I can return the blood, I want to do it. But what should I do? I mean, I'm bones. There's no blood."

"Yup. You don't."

Akai nodded at Kyousuke's words.

"....."

"....."

No way, could it be she didn't think anything up?

"There may be methods such as putting Utsurogi in a pot and take it out together with soup stock though."

"You're okay with that!? I'm not a dried bonito!?"

"Then I can only think of crunching the bones."

It was unclear whether the words Akai spoke was a joke or was it serious.

So lightly did she said '*make you return the blood*', but it still wasn't something that could be done so easily. Kyousuke was dejected. Even assuming bones can be crunched and got the blood back, he didn't know how much should be eaten.

Supposing returning blood was possible, there might have been a method of entrusting the factors to Akira the wisp or Kagoi the gargoyle and collecting them when in danger. Or so he thought, but even if bones could be eaten, since fire and rock were inedible, it was an impossible story.

"If, Utsurogi-kun, and Himemizu-san ... combine?"

Sakuma muttered that kind of thing.

“Won’t there be blood in Extreme Cross?”

“I want to refrain.”

Akai said in a stiff tone. Kyousuke inclined his head.

“Why?”

“Because in Extreme Cross mode, part of the factors will return to ground state, and then half is Himemizu. We don’t even know if the factors will return, do we?”

“Well, you’ve got a point.”

Akai nodded to Akira’s words. But her true feelings didn’t seem to be limited to just that at all.

Only, the person herself said she didn’t want to, so they probably shouldn’t. Let’s forget this matter.

“Well then, we don’t know if returning blood is possible. Why did you talk about this?”

“You’re more or less my kin. So I thought to let you know.”

Saying just that, Akai greatly sighed and entrusted her back to the wall.

“Talking is tiresome. Well then, I’ll return to my room...”

“A–Asuka-chan! It’s a rare chance, so let’s get off the ship!”

Just as Akai was trying to turn her back, Sakuma pulled her arm and stopped it.

“Akai, Ryuzaki said that he’s going to negotiate with the humans of the island and see if we can get blood.”

“...I’ll be waiting without any expectations. Sachi, accompany me till the room.”

“Y–yeah...”

Saying so, Akai had Sakuma lend her a shoulder and headed back to her room.

“Akai,”

Akira called out to her back.

“Do pay attention to Harui and Hebetsuka once in a while. To not be depended on by your friends can be surprisingly painful.”

“...Kaoru also told me the same thing.”

Akai whispered and returned to her room.

Was it because the ship had stopped for a while, Akira's condition had considerably improved. Looking at that Akira, Kyouzuke muttered.

“Hey, Akira, that just now, were you insinuate about me?”

He timidly tried to asked, then pfft, Akira laughed.

“I think being able to read too much into the malice of others is part of your growth, but that's not my intention or anything.”

“I'm counting on you, Akira.”

“Stop it. I said that's not my intention.”

After that, Kyouzuke and Akira went up to the deck.

On the deck was Rin — waiting in solitude all this time, she was shedding large drops of tears and it took them lots of effort to comfort her.

The sun had set, the merchants retired to their ship and prepared for the trade fair that would be held a few days later.

Or so was the original plan, but for some reason, Bergel — chieftain of Delf Island — decided to hold a welcome party this time. As they were told, it seemed to be something proposed by a man who took charge of heavy responsibilities as his right hand man. That man didn't show up at the welcome party, he only sent words of welcome through the chieftain.

Because not just the merchants, but the students of 2nd year class 4 had been invited as well, it was quite generous of him. In consideration of students with big physique, the welcome party was being held in the plaza at the center of the village. Men with painted black skin throughout their body beat the drums, matching the rhythm, bewitching women — illuminated by bonfire — showed off intense dancing.

“Just like a continuation of the field trip...”

Someone spoke their impression. Certainly, it did feel that way.

“Welkano-san, thank you very much.”

Welkano — leader of the caravan — and Ryuzaki — leader of 2nd year class 4 — were seating side-by-side.

Contrastive to Ryuzaki's gratitude, Welkano simply inclined his head.

"I don't remember doing anything that deserves gratitude though..."

"It's because you has properly said that we're sufficiently trustworthy when introducing us to chieftain Bergel..."

"That's a promise. A merchant has to keep his promises."

Welkano's way of speaking was cold, but for that part, Ryuzaki was convinced that this man was a man with a sincere way of thinking, limited to business.

Also, Ryuzaki wanted to purchase the material for the caterpillar unit by using him as the intermediary.

However, there was still things he had to think about.

One of them was Inugami's story. *There's vampire on this island.*

Once an uproar occurs, it will be more difficult to get blood for Akai. Whether to fight or to chase them out, it needs to be done confidentially. The problem is how the vampire is hiding.

I would like to consult with the guys who can be war potential such as Kyouusuke or Goubayashi.

Thereupon, a noticeably big applause reverberated in the plaza. The dancing had just ended.

"All right then, next is our turn to give a performance!"

One student said so and stood up. Little screams appeared here and there.

That was the headless public morals committee member, Kensaki Megumi.

"I'll perform a martial arts demonstration. Goubayashi, please keep me company!"

"Mu, me...?"

"There's only you or Okumura who practice martial arts, right?"

Receiving Kensaki's words, Goubayashi's giant body sluggishly rose up. Because his height was 3 meters and other students and the humans were sitting, he looked like a towering giant, reaching the cloud itself.

"Can I ad-lib?"

“No problem. I’ll attack, you defend.... Don’t get hurt?”

“I’ll be careful.”

Among the clamorous excitement, Kensaki and Goubayashi started a mock battle so fierce you can’t think of it as martial arts demonstration at all. Kensaki probably wasn’t going to actually hit him, but she continuously attacked Goubayashi with slashes almost invisible to the eyes, Goubayashi, on the other hand, caught all of them.

Since Kensaki was properly stopping her attacks just before they hit, not a single blade had touched Goubayashi’s skin, but to onlookers, it looked just like Goubayashi was taking every slash with those big arms of his. Finally, Goubayashi caught the sword Kensaki swung down between two fingers, stepped past her and aimed a backhand blow toward her back.

When he suddenly stopped his fist, the martial demonstration ended and the plaza was once again wrapped up in applause.

Now that it came to this, there was no stopping the easily getting into tune 2nd year class 4. Students raised their hand one after another, in a blink of an eye, the welcome party finished its transformation into a surprised monster one-liner convention.

As a matter of fact, not all students had participated in the welcome party. Akai was staying in bed as usual, and some students were on standby at the ship in preparation for an emergency. As for Akai, her feelings could probably be summed up as *‘give me blood if you welcome me’*.

However, with reasons absolutely different from that Akai, Inugami Hibiki stealthily slipped out from the plaza.

It’s the smell of blood.

Inugami was sensitive to the special smell that a certain blood clan emitted. That smell of blood was neither one nor two. Several of those were drifting from the dense forest. Transforming her body into silver furred wolf, Inugami chased after that smell. The sailor suit, skirt and even underwear were flung off, but she could just recover them later.

While following the smell, Inugami looked up to the sky. Two full moons had come and gone after coming over here, yet the first time was in the dungeon,

the 2nd on the sea, she didn't had many chances to demonstrate her strength.

Even in this other world, the moon's magical power remained unchanged. That was one of the few good news for Inugami.

Nonetheless, now was half-moon, and last quarter at that. It was still far off from being able to bring out her full power.

I cannot do anything unreasonable. It seems better to return to the plaza once I chase after the smell to some extent.

Is it because I have been living with that carefree bunch? It feels like my crisis management ability had dulled quite a lot. I should take as much safety margin as possible.

When chasing after the blood smell for a little while, she suddenly came upon a spot where the the smell thickened. Twitching her nose, she rubbed it on the ground. The origin of the smell was probably 5. There had been at least 5 vampires here.

“(Now's a good time...?)”

Getting any deeper than this might put herself at risk. Smell this strong wouldn't disappear so easily, so returning to the plaza and investigate it again tomorrow with other members would be a better choice.

As Inugami was trying to turn back, shadows suddenly flitted through at the corner of her vision.

Reflexively and quickly, she looked over. A smell, a stench so unpleasant it felt like her nose would break. Shiny black armor.

It was those lots.

Moreover, that face, she remembered seeing it somewhere before.

“(Is he, the driver...?)”

Could it be the man sitting on the driver seat of that bus that got into the falling accident two months ago?

That guy was also a vampire. Since the bus had conveniently plunged into the installed Transference Denaturation Gate, this too was just natural? Or perhaps Inugami just didn't hear it and Akai had already brought this information to the

class.

As far as she could see, his rank was Pawn. It was half-moon right now, she might be able to bite him to death if she fought desperately. But there were traces of 4 other vampires on this island. It was optimal to retreat without pushing herself, but Inugami had a reason she couldn't do that right now.

It was children. There were human children.

Ahead of the driver's line of sight was probably sake or something to use for the welcome party. The drink was put into a large container and two children — appearing to be big sis and little bro — were slowly carrying that. The vampire was obviously aiming at those two.

She hesitated shortly. But Inugami decided.

“GURUOOUUU!!”

She kicked the land and broke into a run, cutting the distance to behind the vampire in an instant. The face with slackened meat turned back, it was warped with fear for a moment. Inugami opened her big jaws and stabbed her fang into his slackened throat. As it was, she used her forelegs to push down that vampire — who was little vertically and wide horizontally.

The driver struggled, but Inugami didn't released her jaws. Taking a glance, she saw that the siblings were going to escape to the plaza at this rate. She had a feeling that the brother looked over here for a moment, but she didn't have time to care about it more than that.

Now, what do I do?

Will I wait for werewolf poison to circulate his entire body and kill all of the factors.

Or bite off his windpipe with all my strength?

It may be better to retreat once I know that the children have definitely escape to a safety zone.

But neither of those results came true.

Without any advance warning, foreign substance bit into Inugami's body. That felt like lead bullets. Stabbing pain ran, fresh blood scattered. Taking advantage of the moment Inugami staggered, the vampire under her legs forcibly shook

her off.

“GUuuu...!”

‘*Shall I escape?*’ The moment she thought so, a 2nd bullet dug into her shoulder.

“Kyaan...!”

Screaming, Inugami’s body rolled on the ground.

“I have heard that descendant of the dogs were lurking, but well...”

She heard a male voice unlike that of the driver.

“Ohh, you saved me Tokihara-san.”

“Oops, is it okay to call me that name? Asaake-san.”

The words they exchanged and the Japanese names. It was certain. These guys belonged to the blood clan. Inugami tried to stood up, but she couldn’t bring out her strength.

“How about the Queen? Was you able to contact her?”

“The skeleton group in the report were on standby at the heavy cruiser. Unnecessary meddling isn’t really possible. Even though I have the welcome party open to clear out the people...”

The Queen. Contact Akai Asuka. Is that this lots’ objective?

Judging from the way they are talking, they may even know of Akai’s bad condition. It is unknown what their purpose is, but it is obviously good-for-nothing anyway. I have to escape somehow, and let Ryuzaki and the others know, but still, my body doesn’t move.

The two people continued their conversation as though the likes of Inugami was already not there. *You’re looking down on me*, Inugami thought, but since she had already fallen to this state, they could just kill her anytime they wished. This was the flip side of that.

Around the time they finished 2 or 3 stories about Akai, Asaake the driver suddenly looked at Inugami.

“However, carrying guns is dangerous...”

“Well, just in case something happens. These are bullets of the kind that remain

in the body and dissolve neurotoxin. Well, I think she won't be able to move for a while..."

Gun, as expected, it's gun. Just the part that I didn't eat a silver bullet is still better, but being like this may be same thing.

"Shall we kill it?"

Saying so, Asaake approached.

Something, anything, I have to convey about these guys to someone in the class. Inugami desperately struggled and stabbed her claw into the trunk of a tree nearby.

"No,"

The man named Tokihara said this in a cold voice.

"I thought of something good. Asaake-san, we have a good method to make the Queen surrender."

"Hou, what is it? I'm curious."

"Do you know why our King wanted to eradicate the blood of these worthless dogs?"

The man spoke in a very pompous manner. Inugami kept her claws hook on the tree trunk and somehow managed to stand up, but she took a kick to her side and collapsed again.

Looking at Inugami rolling on the ground, Tokihara snorted. He squatted down, forcibly grabbed Inugami's lower jaw. Inugami didn't even have strength remained to oppose that. Tokihara gazed inside Inugami's jaws in which sharp fangs grew.

"The saliva of these guys can forcibly return the vampire factors to ground state. Since it's a valuable lone survivor. May be fate has led us to meet it here. Let's make use of it."

Chapter 52 — Class Meeting in a Different

The fact that Inugami Hibiki had disappeared came to light in the middle of the welcome party. After saying a brief excuse to Welkano who was sitting next to him and to chieftain Bergel as well, Ryuzaki left the plaza and headed for the heavy cruiser branch school.

As guards for Akai whose physical condition had gotten worse, Utsurogi Kyousuke, Sakuma Sachiko and others were on standby. He meant to consult with these guys. To Goubayashi, he sent an eye signal, *have them remain here*.

“Yes! Then I will take a taxi and move to 74! Whoa, caught!? I caught him!?”
“No, not yet. Let see then, Mr. X’s actions. He used the bus here and...”

On the deck of the branch school, Kyousuke and the others were amusing themselves with [Scotland Yard](#).

It was a foreign board game. Ryuzaki didn’t know the details rules either. But this was one of the goods confiscated at the old castle.

“Current location is 102.”
“Lie!?”
“I told you so Himemizu, I said to take the subway and go right a bit ago, didn’t I...?”
“Yup, I said that too...”
“Please say it a bit stronger then!”
“Or rather, Utsurogi is quite good at trickery. This too is growth?”
“Haha, I got mixed feelings about this...”

Without knowing the rules, Ryuzaki had no idea what they were talking about at all, but he thought it best that they seemed happy.

Had her condition gotten better? This time, even Akai had participated in the board game as well. Or rather, everyone who remained at the heavy cruiser branch school were playing. Kyousuke, Akira, Rin, Akai, Sakuma and then Zeku. Zeku was supposed to be unable to communicate with words, so it was unexpected that he participated as a player in the board game that seemed complicated in its own way.

“While Rin had gone off course, Zeku’s reading is too precise it’s scary though...”

Moreover, he seemed to be putting up quite a fight.

No, this isn’t the situation to be thinking so carefreely. Ryuzaki raised his hand in order to consult about the present situation.

“Ah, it’s Ryuzaki-kun. Yahoo—!”

First to notice was Rin, she waved her body and greeted.

“Ryuzaki, has the welcome party over there ended already?”

“No, not yet. A little problem has cropped up so I come to report.”

When he briefly informed them, everyone’s expression ... stiffened? He didn’t quite understand their expression, but tension was mixed in the air.

Kyousuke put down on the deck the thing that looked to be a memo board.

“What happened?”

“From the conclusion, Inugami has disappeared.”

Ryuzaki understood that the tension mixed in the air became more certain.

In the first place, the reason why Kyousuke and the others were guarding this heavy cruiser branch school where Akai slept was mostly due to that Inugami’s report. *Vampire is on this island.* In terms of sniffing out those guys’ existence alone, Inugami probably surpassed even Akai.

Ryuzaki had meant to instructed her not to do anything unreasonable by herself, but a lone wolf that she was, it didn’t seem to have much effect.

“Inugami-san.... I, should have followed her.”

Sakuma muttered. Certainly, she was presently almost the only student who could grasp the reins of Inugami Hibiki. But there was no point to say this and that at this point.

“What do you mean by ‘*disappeared*’ in the first place? Is she just gone from the welcome party venue?”

“That’s right, Utsurogi. Therefore, we still don’t know if that girl is in any danger. However...”

“Well, if Inugami is acting independently then 8 or 9 cases out of 10, it’s linked

to the blood clan, therefore...”

Kyousuke crossed his arms and nodded.

“We had better hurry if there’s a possibility of Inugami fighting with those guys.”

From the side, Akira said.

“Inugami didn’t transform to a monster by the Transference Denaturation Gate, she’s a werewolf by birth. The blood clan has no reason to keep her alive.”

Exactly as he stated. Supposing the result of Inugami acting independently was a fight with the blood clan, the situation might even change for the worst. The uncertainties of the situation had produced a strange uncomfortableness. The 2nd year class 4 had already got Kogane kidnapped by those guys, Washio had been killed. On top of that, even Inugami..., they felt very impatient.

“Anyway, it’s not the time for Scotland Yard.”

Rin clearly said so and started putting away the board game spread on the deck. Only Zeku who couldn’t grasp the situation was making a little strangely lonely look. **Pon pon**, Rin patted his shoulders.

“Yup yup, let’s play again next time. Something like [Catan](#) or [Dominion](#). I don’t know the rules, but Saa-chan know them all.”

“Then what do we do? The sun has already set, but are we looking for the vampires now?”

Ryuzaki’s remark was probably intended for not only Ryuzaki. He was confirming it with Akai who was of the same blood clan. Although Akai’s condition had gotten better than in daytime, when thinking of the onset of Blood Crave Illness, they couldn’t let her push herself. On the contrary, the blood clan might even get to know of Akai’s bad condition and started to move. Since Akai didn’t say anything, Ryuzaki decided to state his opinion.

“First thing first, whether or not will we inform Welkano-san and chieftain Bergel of the case of Inugami going missing.”

Saying so, Ryuzaki folded his fingers.

“Before the fact that they didn’t completely trust us, there is even the possibility of the humans having some connection to the vampires. I don’t want to say anything careless.”

“But if they’re connected to the vampires, they would have know of Inugami case anyway, there’s no point to hiding it, is there?”

That’s true. Once being told, Ryuzaki noticed. As expected, thinking alone will surely got your head trapped inside the box?

Akira supplemented Kyouzuke’s words with his understanding.

“Rather, if they’re connected to the vampires, they would take our not informing them of Inugami missing case as unnatural. I think it’s better to tell them that news of Inugami has been cut off and predict the situation based on their reaction.”

“Akira, their reaction ... you say, but what exactly do you mean?”

“In short, Kyouzuke, if they’re good humans who know nothing, they should show a sympathetic correspondence at the news that Inugami has gone missing. In case it’s not so, it doesn’t feel too serious, or else they treat that information with cruelty, we can judge that they’re connected to the vampires.”

What Akira pointed out was most reasonable, to the point of being absolutely natural when thinking theoretically. He was a reliable man exactly at times like these. He was completely down during the voyage due to seasickness, but accordingly, the statements he made at these times was highly credible. Kyouzuke, Rin, and then Sakuma, each and everyone nodded to Akira’s words.

Now then, the next problem.

First, they had to recognize once again that they were completely behind the vampires that were supposed to be hiding on this island. *Does the opponent know of Akai’s condition? What kind of purpose will they have when trying to contact us? Is Inugami safe? If safe, then where is she?*

Every single information was overwhelmingly insufficient.

“Even though we won’t lose if it’s a simple fist fight...”

Because Kyouzuke unusually spat out words unsuitable to him, Ryuzaki’s eyes went round.

“Utsurogi, you’re quite confident...”

“Kyouusuke-kun, you see, is in the midst of searching for his new self, forming a character.”

“Don’t put it so strangely.”

Pechin, Kyouusuke slapped Rin lightly. Sakuma was watching that with eyes that seemed a little envious.

This sinful love triangle ain’t nothing you want to meddle with.

“Well, since we can’t make Asuka move, there’s no doubt that Utsurogi and Rin are substantially the strongest in the class, but it’s certain that there’s nothing we can do while knowing neither the opponent’s movement nor their location.”

Once they tried thinking about it, most of the crises that befell the class so far were mostly ones that could be resolved with honest brute force. There was no pattern like this time where they had too little information to either attack or defend and was completely stuck still, unable to move.

This was why Ryuzaki couldn’t make a move either and had come to consult with Kyouusuke group. In terms of result, he was able to obtain a more or less fruitful opinion, but the situation itself still didn’t progress.

“Anyway,”

Saying, Kyouusuke started to stand up.

“If the vampires of Red Moon who are hiding on this island have already come into contact with Inugami, our being here on this island has already been leaked. The purpose of the opponent is still unknown, but it’s better to make sure our classmates act as a team to a certain extent.”

“That’s certainly right.”

Ryuzaki nodded too.

The vampires of Red Moon aimed to take in the students — who was transformed into monsters through the Transference Denaturation Gate — as war potential. It was dangerous to act alone on this island. First was to take the utmost attention so that no more student would stray like that.

So to speak, it was a story of ‘*defense*’.

And with Inugami falling into the enemy’s hands and going missing, the story

of 'offense' became necessary as well.

That in turn led to the question of how to do that.

"Don't be so cold, class rep. What are you doing talking about such important things without us?"

A voice was heard from behind. Ryuzaki turned around and there stood a gillman, Uozumi Sakeichiro, before one knew it, he was standing there, leaning his back against the side of the ship.

"Ohh, everyone came back."

Rin brightly said. As she said, the ones over there weren't just Uozumi alone. Ascending the gangway extended to the beach, the students of 2nd year class 4 were returning in succession. Naturally, Goubayashi among them. Kyousuke group welcomed the return of other members normally, but Ryuzaki was a little perplexed.

The welcome party was in full swing. Not so many minutes had passed since Ryuzaki had slipped out from within that big excitement. *Does that mean everyone slipped out in the middle of the welcome party and come over here?* From the direction of the plaza deep inside the forest, the light of the bonfire illuminating the night sky was still visible.

"Class rep, did you say Inugami is gone?"

"Do you know the circumstances?"

"As expected, it's the deed of those vampire lots?"

The students, while intruding on the deck, forcefully approached. Ryuzaki sent a little resentful gaze at Goubayashi. *I'm sure I sent an eye signal saying to remain there though?*

"That gaze, Ryuzaki. I take it as «I'm leaving everyone in the class to you»."

Goubayashi, arms crossed, said.

"Since *everyone in the class* was circulating this kind of thing, I decided to exit the welcome party."

What Goubayashi took out after saying that was a small piece of paper. It was a folded memo pad. By the side of Ryuzaki who was making a quizzical

face, Kyousuke took that up and opened it.

“«*Class rep and Inugami are gone. Those who worries about this, give it to your neighbor*». Ohh, this kind of things used to go around in the middle of class. Never got to my place though.”

“Kyousuke-kun.... Let’s stop joking about having few friends at this timing...”

Ryuzaki remained silent and peered into the memo pad Kyousuke had opened. He instantly recognized whose was it in the class just by looking at the handwriting, but he didn’t say it out loud. At the welcome party, the classmates of 2nd year class 4 were seated in a circle formation together with the merchants of the maritime caravan. The student who wrote this was at one end, Goubayashi was at the other end. Which meant, this memo had doubtlessly passed through the eyes of everyone in the class.

The fact that they were here was the consensus of every classmates.

“As might be expected, I’m not unfeeling enough to be so carefree while one of my classmate has disappeared.”

Nekomiya — with the same pretentious tune as usual — said so.

“I would hate it if another Washio came out.”

Hakuba’s manner of speaking was cold, but his tone was a little strong.

“It’s time for that Ryuzaki. Another class meeting in a different world.”

“Right.... Look like we should do that.”

Ryuzaki nodded to Kyousuke’s words.

Nonetheless, there wasn’t any fact that had to be said again here. The 5th class meeting in a different world — hastily held on the deck — mostly focused on two points: ‘*How should they act on this Albadanba from now on?*’ and ‘*How are they going to look for Inugami?*’.

Both Kyousuke and Ryuzaki were a little surprised because their classmates’ determination was more firm than expected. Should it be said as before one knew it, or was these changes already too slow? Still, from the fact that they had a strong feeling to avoid parting with Inugami and decided to stir up trouble with the vampires in order to avoid that, they didn’t try to avert their eyes or

escape reality.

“The growing ones are not just Kyouusuke-kun.”

Whispered Rin into his ears.

“For now, I will inform Welkano-san and chieftain Bergel of Inugami missing case tomorrow.”

Ryuzaki said that to everyone.

“Moreover, I’m thinking to change the correspondence by observing the other party’s attitude. Then, the problem is how are we going to find Inugami, however...”

Among them was the figure of a girl timidly raising her hand.

It was Hanazono Hana the Alraune. Since she was the type of student that didn’t assert herself too much normally, the gaze of everyone immediately gathered to her.

“Umm ... I think I will try to ask the trees and grasses of this island and look for her.”

It was Hanazono’s declaration of intent to try to make use of alraune’s ability — being able to hear voices of plants — for anything other than the home garden for the first time. At a place a bit way, Kinogasa also nodded. Since spores flew every time he nodded, other students had evacuated.

“Then me too, I will try to ask the mushrooms of this island and look for her.”

“Do mushrooms grow on this island.”

“It should be okay since some fairly poisonous guys are growing.”

Ryuzaki uneasily scratched his cheek, Kinogasa reassuringly commented.

“I see, then me too, why don’t I try to ask the tentacles growing wildly on this island...?”

“Are tentacles the kind that grow wildly...?”

“It should be okay since some fairly poisonous guys are growing.”

Shokuzura reassuringly commented.

“Well, I more or less understand. It’s best to have many ways to search. Utsurogi, you and Rin please go together with Hanazono group as guards.”

“Hmm, understood.”

“I’ll leave it to you—.”

There was no way the vampires would leave it alone once they knew this side was looking for Inugami’s whereabouts. Thus Kyouzuke and Rin who could best Knight-class vampire were attached as guards.

Additionally, plans such as students capable of flight searching from the sky came out, among them, Nekomiya Miya proposed this:

“I think it’s better to have on standby an agile rescue unit that can immediately rush to the rescue once we know Inugami’s whereabouts. I who can use «*Shadow Passage*» and then I want agile students like Saruwatari.”

“Understood. I’ll leave the composition to Nekomiya. The students who joined the rescue team are to stay at a place we can contact at anytime.... But better not at the branch school. I want you to wait near the village where we had that welcome party.”

This rescue unit had Goubayashi attached as a guard. It was supposed to be a team with high combat ability on average, but it was a little insufficient to fight against one Pawn. On that point, Goubayashi would never fall behind the degree of Pawn-class vampires.

“Then I shalt protect this branch school.”

With voice unusually clear, Harao Masaki said. Because students who owned Pawn-class fighting ability was limited, Ryuzaki had planned to arrange like that anyway, but it was still surprising to see him propose it by himself.

“Protecting the branch school is substantially Asuka’s guard, isn’t it? I’ll join too.”

The one who said that and raised her ... his hand was Kaoru. Yes, protecting the branch school was protecting Akai.

Because they didn’t know how the opponent would move, they couldn’t afford to leave Akai in this bad condition defenseless.

So the discussion will be this smooth when the students assertively cooperate?
Ryuzaki couldn’t hide his surprise. So far, he had worried by himself, consulted his reliable friends sometimes, hurt his head in thinking about group division,

but this made him realize how inefficient that was.

The class might be starting to show its unity in the truest sense at last.

“As for everyone else, I want you to nonchalantly continue to prepare for the trade fair starting from tomorrow. The problem of Inugami and the vampire on this island indeed requires urgency, but this trade fair is also an event we can’t be shoddy with. If we can make it a success, we may be able to get blood for Akai as well as prepare the materials for a new caterpillar unit when we’re moving on the continent again.”

Everyone nodded at Ryuzaki’s words.

A battle with the vampires might take place on this Albadanba. But if possible, he didn’t want to involve the islanders or the merchants in this. Not only for humane reasons, but also to avoid taking any actions that would invite their distrust.

After dividing to a search unit, a rescue unit, and then a guard unit for the branch school, the remaining personnel were to hasten the preparation for the trade fair. The island wasn’t wide, but it was by no means narrow. They needed to hasten the work while making sure not to be distracted even if a battle did occur.

Naturally, this was a story when Welkano and chieftain Bergel were NOT related to the vampires.

At a glance, those two were just ordinary humans. Because they weren’t vampires, there would be a little abusive method,

“...Sakuma,”

Ryuzaki called out to the succubus girl who had remained silent so far.

“In the unlikely event that I tell you to use «*Temptation*» on Welkano-san and/or chieftain Bergel, can you do it?”

When she heard that question, Sakuma made a face like she had received a surprise attack. Her mouth shut tight, her gaze dropped and started swimming. Conflict emerged. Sakuma’s gaze turned to Kyouzuke direction for a moment, and it wasn’t Ryuzaki to overlook that.

He roughly sensed her feelings.

“...Understood. If you need to prepare your heart, I won’t force you. You don’t need to prepare your heart in a hurry either. Good?”

“...Yeah.”

The significance in his words, Sakuma probably understood as well. If the question of whether or not she would be able to use «*Temptation*» destabilized the situation, then it would be better to clearly decide not to use it from the start. All the more so if Sakuma need to prepare to harden her resolve.

“Ryu-chan, please call me if ever you need «*Temptation*».”

“Right, I’ll be counting on you. Kaoruko.”

In this way, the 5th class meeting came to an end with the discussion generally concluded.

Next day, early in the morning, Kyousuke and the others were about to depart to search for Inugami.

Members of the search unit were Hanazono, Kinogasa, Shokuzura. Attached as their guards were Kyousuke and Rin. Further adding Akira to this team as well made it 6 people in total. Akira’s ability was difficult to use when walking in the forest, but it was great that combining with him allow Kyousuke to fly and overlook the forest from the sky.

Since it became a team without a single group leader, Kyousuke was appointed as the leader.

“...I’m not that kind of gara though.”

“Then what kind of gara are you?”

“It’s dashigara.” [Notes]

So said his one-shot gag that he took the entire night to think up together with Rin, but it wasn’t received very well.

“Utsurogi, better not make too strange a character.”

He even managed to make Kinogasa excessively worry.

“Kinogasa, Kyousuke is making an effort to break his shell to become a new Kyousuke. It’s a good thing.”

“Akira, you don’t need to say anything unnecessary...”

Which is better between ‘empty’ and ‘strange character’? This is a little troubling but let’s set that aside.

“Let’s stop joking at that. We pretty much did come here to search for Inugami.”

On the sandy beach, the quiet sound of the surging wave resounded. The sky where the sun had yet to rise completely was deep blue, stars late to return home were twinkling here and there. It was exactly early in the morning. Sea fog streaming in the beach obscured their vision.

As a matter of fact, they wanted to go searching for Inugami at the very moment the search was decided last night, but they were stopped by Ryuzaki. It was because searching at night was too dangerous. This place was an unfamiliar land, the forest was inhabited by magic beasts, on top of that, vampires were lurking. The islanders could hardly be considered as allies either. As a result of considering various circumstances and taking as much concession as possible, they decided to start the search at the time when night just barely broke into dawn.

“Inugami-san.... She is all right, right?”

Muttered Hanazono.

“We can’t be optimistic.”

Akira uttered cold words.

“But no need to be pessimistic either. Because the information that she came into contact with the vampires itself is only our logical inference. Unexpectedly, she may just be wandering the forest, chasing after butterflies.”

“Yeah...”

Hanazono firmly nodded to his words.

“Then, Kyouzuke-kun. What do we do now?”

Rin asked Kyouzuke who was gazing at the dense forest.

“What do you mean by what do we do?”

“You know, that. Setting aside tentacles and mushrooms anyway, grass is growing everywhere, isn’t it? If you make Hana-chan talk to them one-by-one,

the sun will instantly set...”

“For now, let’s try going to the plaza where the welcome party was held yesterday.”

Kyousuke looked around at everyone and said.

“In which direction did Inugami go after she slipped out from the welcome party? First is to follow her footsteps.”

Chapter 53 — Vermillion's Research

"It's possible that the Queen and those guys has noticed our existence."

It was around the time the sky had barely turned light that Tokihara informed Asaake.

To be precise, he informed not just Asaake. In the vacant house Tokihara had prepared inside the forest, several vampires were on standby. All of them were the Pawns who had withdrawn from the old castle together with Akeno and were lent to Tokihara as war potential.

He was talking to those guys. Tokihara was using them to figure out the Queen's movement from now, and if possible, take her blood and present it to the King.

"As expected, it's bad to collect that dog?"

One of the Pawns asked. Tokihara nodded.

"There's already nothing we can do at the point Asaake-san is attacked by the dog. The result would be the same even if we kill it and leave its corpse there. According to the chieftain, they seem to have left the welcome party midway through and returned to the warship anchored offshore."

"Tokihara-san, how's the dog doing?"

"It's being chained to the basement. We only need to be vigilant for 2 or 3 days. It's half moon heading toward new moon right now, but chains of that degree can be easily torn off."

Last night, Asaake aimlessly wandered outside and took a surprise attack from the werewolf survivor. Since Asaake hadn't got human blood in nearly one month, he was probably out looking for food. In doing so, he received a surprise attack, truly unlucky.

As expected, letting these vampires going out wasn't a good plan. It had been about half a month since Akeno group crossed the sea and reached this Albadanba. The islanders of Delf Island showed them in as guests and sent them off, but naturally, they didn't know Akeno and her group were vampires, neither did they know that several Pawns were left behind at Tokihara's place.

“Well, everything will be settled in 2 or 3 days. If you need food, I will prepare for you after that, so I would like you to be a little patient.”

Once the trade fair was over, they too, would leave this Albadanba. They had to fulfill their purpose before that.

There were two actions this side should take.
One, look for those guys’ future objectives and route through the chieftain.
Another one, steal blood from the Queen who was probably in the warship.

The later was obviously highly difficult. Besides, Tokihara had better not come out directly. It would be troublesome if the chieftains realize his attack on the warship. Officially, he needed to feign unrelated.

“Conversely, this present situation is a good opportunity.”

Said Tokihara.

“If those guys notice our existences and also know that the dog has gone missing. The Queen’s guards will be thin.”

“I see. Is the aforementioned thing ready?”

“Preparation is being made. As much as possible, we should carry out the plan when those guys are away from the warship.”

It was to acquire that *‘aforementioned thing’* that they had expressly let that dog live. A werewolf saliva had the effect of forcibly returning vampire factors to ground state. Once bitten, it can greatly weaken a vampire’s power, further worsening their condition. For this reason, the King detested their existence, he even tried to destroy their clan, and he did.

No matter if she was the Queen, if the movement of every factors inside her body could be stop, even her would be unable to move. The most troublesome thing when capturing the Queen’s person was the Queen herself. It wasn’t even worth talking about unless they could seal her movement somehow.

Supposing this operation succeed, much less lukewarm things like blood, they could even deliver the person herself to the King’s place.

But if the operation failed and they got beaten at their own game by the Queen,

“(At that time...)”

Tokihara gazed at several bottles lined up on the shelf. Several sealed containers had labels stuck on, inside them was full of scarlet liquid.

“Hey, Tokihara-san.”

A fidgeting Asaake said, all the while gazing at the same direction.

“Can’t I drink that blood?”

“You must not. That is our trump card.”

Passing through the forest in the early morning, they arrived at the plaza where the welcome party was held. Although the burnt trace of the bonfire remained, the plaza had been beautifully cleaned up. The village had return to its tranquility, or so they thought, but there were already signs of people moving. They were the so-called early risers.

Only, meeting them would only make various things troublesome, Kyouusuke thought. Akira who accompanied him was talkative, but his was not what you would call smooth-talking. The remaining members were clumsy at explaining their circumstances as well. If anything, there would only be Rin?

“First of all, let’s start with interviewing the plants.”

The plaza was surrounded by the forest. Problem was, the number of trees were too numerous to ask.

“Leave it to me.”

For some reason, the first one to step forward and tread into the forest with wriggling movement was Shokuzura. A little while after he took out tentacles from his entire body, from nowhere in the forest, awfully colorful, vivid tentacles stretched out. Shokuzura’s tentacles and the forest’s tentacles touched and seemed to be transmitting something.

“There are really tentacles growing wildly...”

Kyouusuke dumbfoundedly muttered.

“I asked Remy-chan, but Albadanba’s tentacles seem to have been bottled alive and used for trade in the maritime caravan.”

“Who would buy that kind of things.”

“She said some people, nobles of the Empire for example.”

Better not ask what happened afterward? In the first place, when did Rin have the time to deepen the cultural exchange with Remy like that? Even as a slime, the communication power of the upper caste of the class was not just for show, Kyouzuke was once again made aware of this.

“Once time, the bottle exploded on the ship midway through bringing it back and it turned into a panic. Remy-chan and everyone barely escaped to other ships, but that ship eventually got hijacked by the tentacles and seems to wander the Ruveling Sea even now.”

“Amazingly unpleasant, that story!”

“It’s called Tentacler Ship. Seems to be famous among the sailors of the continent.”

So then, if they were to bring Shokuzura to that Tentacler Ship, they would be able to obtain another ship to cross the sea? The story of the ship being taken over and ruled by tentacles was indeed unpleasant, but it was a big deal if they could navigate with their own power.

“Kyouzuke.... You’re examining this kind of idle gossip so seriously again...”

Next to him, Akira said that in an astonished tone.

“It’s not particularly idle gossip though—.”

Rin pouted her lips, or transformed her body in a fashion similar to it.

Unnoticed, Kinogasa had also set foot into the forest and started a fancy conversation with the colorful poisonous mushroom growing at his feet. This scene of a mushroom man talking to mushrooms would only appeared horrific to onlookers. Yet what was the different between him and Hanazono who was talking to little flowers right next to him.

Although it was said that investigation was all about walking, this seemed to have become quite a proper search. In the meantime, Kyouzuke and the others had nothing to do, if asked if it was boring then it was boring. They couldn’t let down their guard since they came here as escorts, but there was nothing to do after all.

“Utsurogi, I found something serious!”

Shokuzura's voice came out from the inside the forest. Combined with Rin, accompanied by Akira, Kyousuke set foot inside.

Surrounding Shokuzura were a great number of wriggling tentacles. *Would Shokuzura who communicates with all of those and tames them be something like a Tentacle King?* Kyousuke recalled the ero doujinshi Kogane had lent him back in human days. *I don't want to bring a girl along at all. I did bring two of them though.*

"Does Kyousuke-kun like that kind of thing?"

"I'm not saying I like it."

He clearly denied Rin's question.

"Well then, Shokuzura. What's the serious thing?"

When Kyousuke asked, some tentacles undulated and brought him a white cloth.

It's white cloth. For a moment, Kyousuke wondered what it was, but he instantly saw through its true nature. And then he was speechless. Reserved flower pattern on white background, this laced thing was obviously woman's.

"Underwear?"

Akira easily said.

"Right, they're panties."

Shokuzura rephrased it.

"Not just any panties. They're Inugami's panties. Since I'm really scared I can't touch them, Utsurogi, you take them."

"N-no, even I can't touch them as well..."

"Then I will take them."

Akira's tone appeared unchanged from usual.

"Stop! If Hino take them, they'll be burnt pan right away!"

"In the first place, how can you be so calm Akira..."

"You're just seeing women's underwear, I don't understand why you're so worked up over them.... Aren't they everywhere if you just go to a department store?"

“They’re not just any woman’s! They’re Inugami’s! A classmate’s panties! Moreover, that delinquent girl’s panties!? This pretty cute thing!”

“Yes yes, please leave it at that, you youthful boys.”

From the area around Kyousuke’s shoulders, Rin’s body deftly stretched and received Inugami’s underwear from the tentacle. Naturally, not just underwear. Rin indifferently received the clothes the tentacles handed over, however, only at the moment she received the bra, she intently confirmed the cup size.

“Well, I saw Inugami’s strip show at the base once though.... That’s really shocking.... I remember it.”

Ignoring Shokuzura who was talking ecstatically, Kyousuke and the others once again looked at Inugami’s exuviae.

“She threw away only her clothes, so what does this mean? As a girl, I don’t want to imagine too much though.”

“There’s no need to think so hard, is there? That girl Inugami, she probably took off her clothes when she transformed into a wolf.”

Only, she only flung her clothes like this in case of emergency, normally, she properly folded her clothes and put them in a corner, it seemed. This was a relatively strong stimulating information for a boy in his puberty.

“Utsurogi, I’m mostly done with interviewing the mushrooms ... uwaa! Underwear!?”

“Utsurogi-kun, I asked around a lot but what I know is ... uwaa! Underwear!?”

“They’re not just underwear though...”

Kinogasa and Hanazono came back and both gave the appropriate reaction.

“Well then, how did the investigation go?”

“Ah, yeah. Let’s see, yesterday night, Inugami-san was seen slipping out of the welcome party and passing through this area.”

“The mushrooms seem to have seen till the point Inugami took off her clothes.”

As expected, she didn’t just randomly take them off. It was probably for transformation.

Then why was there a need to transform? There’s no reason other than discovering the vampires, is there? And because Inugami didn’t return, we

should think that there was a battle. Kyouzuke was convinced that their expectation so far wasn't wrong.

"Shokuzura, what did the tentacles say? Did they see Inugami?"

Even if I say so myself, I still think these words are insane, but there should be no mistake.

"Utsurogi.... Tentacles have no eyes. I think there's no reason they can see."

"You're saying that now! Then what about me, Rin and Akira! Don't say that with tone like you're looking at pitiful things!"

"Well, anyway, these guys seem to have no vision. They didn't see Inugami."

Now that it comes to this, do we continue the investigation? Since Inugami took off her clothes here, we should be able to know the direction she headed if we ask the plants.

"Kinogasa, the mushrooms, did they watch until Inugami transformed?"

"Right. However, they seem to be in a daze to burn her figure into their memory so they don't remember what happened after that."

"Why don't tentacles have vision but mushrooms do...?"

After that, Hanazono resumed her questioning and gradually made clear the direction Inugami had headed. Everyone relied on the information Hanazono got and started going deeper into the forest.

A little while later, Hanazono stopped her feet.

"What's the matter? Hanazono..."

When Kyouzuke asked, Hanazono silently pointed at a tree growing in front.

Many brand new cuts were made on the tree trunk. Those looked to be made by an edged tool or sharp fangs and claws. Kyouzuke approached in order to confirm those in details, suddenly he noticed something unusual at his feet.

"Kyouzuke-kun, it's blood."

"Right."

Nodding to Rin, he squatted down, kneeling one knee on the ground. Red liquid stuck on tree roots and grass in the surroundings. Furthermore, the grass on the ground was scrapped up, several hairs shining silver fell on the ground.

Perhaps those were Inugami's hairs when she turned into silver wolf form.

"Does this mean ... there was a battle in this place?"

Akira's words were answered with Kyouzuke's deliberate nod.

"Hanazono, Kinogasa, please ask around for information at this place."

"Yup."

"All right."

As expected, tentacles didn't seem to grow around here. Shokuzura undulated his tentacles and approached Kyouzuke.

This part of the forest was relatively close to the area where there were humans' presence. Right in front of them was an open road, probably one connecting villages that the islanders used. In a place one could see the road, Inugami fought someone — — — very likely to be vampires. Considering the blood and hair as well as the cuts on the tree trunk, Inugami was injured. Those cuts were probably clawed at that time.

"Hibiki-chan, are you all right...?"

Rin muttered worriedly.

"The situation has become indefinite."

As expected, he couldn't say anything irresponsible here. With a grim face, Kyouzuke looked at the tree trunk, suddenly, he noticed something strange.

"The cuts on this tree, are a little strange."

"Strange?"

"Somehow, I feel it's too many for cuts made simply because of pain."

How to put it, these hacked-to-pieces scars. Traces of being chopped over and over in every direction. They are too strange to think of as cuts made naturally. Having said that, they're also too strange for cuts Inugami intentionally made. Could they be messages Inugami left us when she got into a dilemma? But I can't find any regularity at all. Kyouzuke turned around and called out to Hanazono.

"Hanazono, could you please try asking this tree for a bit?"

"Ah, yeah."

Kyousuke took one, two steps back, yielding his place to Hanazono.

“Umm, I should ask about Inugami-san, right?”

“Other than that, I want you to ask who made these cuts as well. ... Akira, you got anything else?”

“No, nothing. I think that’s enough.”

Hanazono nodded and closed her eyes, she softly put one hand on the tree trunk. After that, she softly traced the scars while nodding several times to declare her intention, probably toward the tree.

The telepathy was surprisingly long, it continued for more than ten minutes. Then, Hanazono slowly opened her eyes and said:

“I got two things.”

“Two?”

“Yup.”

Hanazono who reincarnated in the form of a petite girl looked back and informed Kyousuke and the others.

“First is about Inugami-san. Inugami-san seemed to have fought two men here, lost and was taken away.”

Hearing her words, Kyousuke and the others sunk to silent. *Just the part that Inugami wasn’t killed is still fortunate, but this situation is absolutely not good at all. Besides, what exactly is that bunch planning by kidnapping Inugami? Moreover, Hanazono said two men. This means that there are at least two vampires, assuming this is the work of Red Moon.*

“And another thing.”

Hanazono looked at the tree trunk with tragic eyes.

“These cuts seemed to have been made by Inugami-san and one of the men, separately.”

“Come again?”

According to her, this was how it went:

As a result of the battle, Inugami was injured, she raised her claws and scratched the tree trunk, making cuts. After that, one of the men looked at the

tree trunk and noticed something, he took out an edged tool and hacked at the surface of the tree trunk. The time when the men put these cuts on was just before they took Inugami away, exactly when their discussion finished.

“I see, it’s camouflage.”

Akira said.

“That is to say, there is really a hint Hibiki-chan left for us?”

“Right, those guys hid it by making irregular cuts on top of it.... This means the information is bad for them if it’s seen.”

“Rather, felling the tree or peeling the tree bark is ... oops, sorry. Hana-chan.”

Did she noticed that the words she said was cruelty toward plants, Rin hurriedly apologized to Hanazono.

“No, I’m okay.”

“Hanazono, do you know which cuts were made by Inugami?”

“More or less...”

Saying so, Hanazono softly put her finger on the tree trunk, tracing the cuts. Because that was in katakana form of Japanese — a language Kyousuke and the others knew well — they instantly understood.

“To ... ki. Toki?”

Kyousuke inclined his head.

“What is Toki?”

“The endangered species, pelican-ish crested ibis.”

Said Rin. With that as the beginning, the members all around started speaking.

“There’s the southeastern part of Gifu prefecture, adjacent to Aichi prefecture.”

“Or the military commander who lived there.”

“The guy who saw off Lalah just before she passed away.”

“Kenshiro’s oniichan.”

“We’re not doing a comic discussion.” [Notes]

Did he not get any useful information even if he kept talking to mushrooms,

even Kinogasa had mixed in before they knew it. Kyousuke spoke out in an amazed voice.

“Ah, but then—. Kyousuke-kun.”

“Yeah?”

“Toki is written as scarlet and heron, isn’t it?”

“Ahh, that’s right.”

That’s right, he said, but Kyousuke hesitated for a moment whether Toki’s heron was read as *sagi* or not.

“It may be farfetched, but think about the vampires whose names we know so far. They’re Akai, Suou, Akeno, right?”

“What’s Suou?”

“There’s a color called Suou. Utsurogi-kun. It’s dye originally made from a leguminous plant.”

Hanazono supplemented.

“It’s dark red ... isn’t it? Anyway, it’s red.”

“Fumu...”

Akai, Suou, Akeno. Adding to those, Toki?

Certainly, Akai’s story had mentioned that there were human sympathizers who supported the vampires even in the former world. Supplying blood, making arrangements, *etc.* When such human sympathizers were recognized, they would be transplanted the *factors* and become vampires.

As far as he had heard, it was a very closed society. But surprisingly, adding the color ‘red’ to their last name might not be so ridiculous a story.

“This may be a big clue.”

“Right. But Inugami has fallen into the enemy’s hands, so we can’t be too carefree.”

As if to warn Kyousuke, Akira said.

“Now, will we temporarily go back to Ryuzaki, or will we hurry ahead with the investigation? We’d better decide this carefully.”

Being told so, Kyousuke pondered. When he looked up, the sun had already

risen, the sky peeking through between the leaves was turning blue. Since Ryuzaki had said that he was going to move first thing in the morning, if they was to go to chieftain Bergel's house right now, they would be in time to report this information. They might be able to get information about the person called Toki.

"Speaking of which, the bus driver's name is Asaake, isn't it?"

"Is that so?"

"Guide-san said so. *His name is unusual*, she said. *Asaake, written as light scarlet.*"

"...That girl Akai, she didn't say anything about such an important information."

Kyousuke scratched his head.

"Akai-san won't say it properly unless you ask her, isn't that right?"

"Sensei and Guide-san may be questioned as well if the bus driver is a vampire, so she probably didn't want to give too much unnecessary information."

Listening to Akira's words, Kyousuke recalled his homeroom teacher — Katsubushi Dashihiko. *He is a teacher who stood out as being a little irresponsible and halfhearted, but I think he is a good adult with flexibility. He too, should've been involved in that bus falling accident, but what has become of him after that?*

No, now is not the time to think about unnecessary things. Kyousuke shook his head and expelled the information from his head. [Reminder]

Certainly, there was the possibility of the bus driver Asaake being a vampire, but he decided to leave it alone for now.

As for the name called '*Toki*' written on this tree trunk, it was very possible that it was the last name of a vampire. And the fact that they had gone out of their way to erase it, meant that the name '*Toki*' might lead to their true identity being exposed.

"Which means, the name '*Toki*' may be known among the humans of the island, right?"

Continuing after Kyousuke's thought she had read, Rin said.

"But such a person didn't come to the welcome party last night."

"I don't think there's anyone stupidly honest enough to show themselves like

that. If they're Japanese, they will be exposed instantly.”

“If we assume so, he must have made sure to tell people not to mention his name. Especially to the chieftains.”

Certainly, the character string *‘Toki’* seemed very Japanese compared to other islanders’.

But could they be shaken with just this information? And if it was possible, but the chieftain and Welkano knew and had ties with the vampires, shaking them up would just have the opposite effect. Inugami’s life might also be in danger if the enemy was to know that this side had grasped information about *‘Toki’*.

The case «*‘Toki’ is connected to the chieftains*» was troublesome, but even the pattern of «*The chieftains are going along with ‘Toki’, all the while not knowing his true character*» was also troublesome in a different way. It would take not just any ordinary effort to prove that he was a harmful vampire. And for all that, they still had to be held accountable in case this island became a battlefield.

“Let’s continue the investigation.”

Kyousuke said.

“We will confirm where Inugami had been taken, and let the rescue unit know. Telling Ryuzaki and uncovering the true character of *‘Toki’* can be done later.”

This decision might be accompanied by danger. If he wanted to ensure his, Hanazono and the others’ safety, it would be more valid to go explaining things to Ryuzaki first.

But if he considered the time Inugami had been taken, whether or not the enemy had sensed their movements, or if the danger would extend to the islanders or the merchants as well, he wanted to avoid further time loss by turning back here.

He might have exposed the entire team to danger because of his selfish thinking.

“(It’s okay, Kyousuke-kun)”

Rin's thoughts echoed in his heart.

“(We will protect everyone, absolutely)”

“(Right)”

Together with strong determination, Kyouzuke gazed at the forest.

A few minutes later, equipped with the information Hanazono had gotten, everyone started advancing in the forest.

Chapter 54 — Secret Maneuvering

“One of your friends, is gone ... you say?”

“Fumu...”

At chieftain Bergel’s house, Ryuzaki had just finished conveying Inugami missing case.

The one grabbing Ryuzaki’s tail was Satomi Yamako who reincarnated as a satori.

If one was to speak of reading the opponent’s heart, it would be a considerably convenient ability in battle, but what Satomi could do was only telling the veracity of what the opponent was saying. It had been arranged that Satomi would pull Ryuzaki’s tail to notify him when there was any falsehood in Welkano or chieftain Bergel’s words.

Because the monster called satori had a figure close to that of human’s, and they weren’t confirmed to be inhabiting in Albadanba and the Continent, people wouldn’t be particularly vigilant of her.

Satomi’s ability was basically always active. She would instantly know if anyone lied within her perception range. Because Satomi herself hated that, she had always been reluctant to cooperate in matters like these, until now. This time only, she had willingly volunteered. Ryuzaki wasn’t going to ask the reason for her change of heart, but he was very grateful for it.

Now, in front of Ryuzaki were both Bergel and Welkano.

Today was the day after the welcome party. A few days later, the trade fair would be held. Each representative had gathered under the pretext of discussing matters concerning that trade fair, but Ryuzaki had started by broaching the subject of Inugami.

Satomi who was grabbing his tail show no reaction. That was obvious. The other party hadn’t said anything yet, there was nothing to judge its veracity.

This will depend on my art of conversation. Ryuzaki continued.

“Chieftain Bergel, I think Inugami disappeared during the welcome party, do you know something?”

“No.... I, don’t know...”

Twitch, Satomi pulled Ryuzaki’s tail. *Got a hit right away?*

Without revealing it on his face, Ryuzaki turned his gaze to Welkano.

“How about Welkano-san?”

“I also don’t know anything.”

Satomi didn’t pull his tail.

Chieftain Bergel seemed to know ‘*something*’ about Inugami’s disappearance. But it was still premature to judge that he had connection with the enemy vampires. There was also the case that he was hiding that ‘*something*’ just because he was vigilant of this side, in that case, Ryuzaki had to remove the origin of that vigilance first.

But in case chieftain Bergel was in cahoots with the vampires, he needed to uncover that fact, and fast. If he just let the chieftain escape like this and report to the enemy vampires, Inugami’s live might also be in danger.

Ryuzaki first considered: What information could he reveal?

In the chieftain Bergel was connected to the vampires, he would have known that Inugami Hibiki was a survivor of the werewolf already. There was no need to keep that a secret.

On the other hand, in case chieftain Bergel had no connection whatsoever to the vampires, he likely wouldn’t know of her existence itself. Thrusting the fact they this side knew yet the other side didn’t, would be effective to shake them up.

And the same could be said about Welkano as well.

“...Actually, Inugami has the ability to sniff out the scent of vampires.”

First, Ryuzaki broached the subject. *So it’s Welkano-shi who shows reaction to his huh.*

“Do you know about the vampires called Red Moon that are causing troubles on the continent?”

Both of them nodded. Welkano naturally knew of it as he was a merchant, stocking up information was a matter of course to him, but apparently,

chieftain Bergel seemed to know of it as well. Albadanba was supposed to be isolated, but perhaps, there were more people coming and going than one might think.

“In fact, last night Inugami has told me that there may be vampires on this island.”

“What...!”

Chieftain Bergel raised his voice before anyone else.

“Why have you guys stayed silent about that until now...!?”

His tone wasn't exactly filled with anger, but there was a slight criticism in it. This was natural, thinking of his standpoint, and there was no positive proof that this was simply acting, at least not yet. Ryuzaki — knowing that it would irritate the other party — purposely asked this:

“Chieftain Bergel, you didn't know about it...?”

“Naturally. I don't want to speak like this, but if vampires were known to be lurking on this island, our correspondence with you would have been different as well.”

Satomi, didn't pull his tail. Chieftain Bergel truly didn't know about the vampire existence.

Ryuzaki sorted the information in his head for a moment.

Chieftain Bergel is hiding something from us about Inugami missing case. But he didn't know that vampires are lurking on this island. Although I can be relieved knowing that he has no connection to the vampires, the problem now is why he needs to keep secrets about Inugami missing case?

It will be difficult to get the information out of him. Since the other party is intentionally lying, it'll be most difficult to expose it. Not that I can't point out his lies and forcibly make him speak, but that's too risky.

“I apologize to have kept silent about the vampires until now.” [Rants]

Ryuzaki politely bowed his head and apologized.

“Ryuzaki-dono, may I ask one thing?”

The one who asked that question was Welkano-shi of the maritime caravan.

“What is it?”

“May it not be possible that you are a part of that Red Moon? It may be impolite of me to ask this, but there are voices worrying about it even among us. So taking the opportunity, I want you to make it clear.”

Ryuzaki hesitated for a moment.

Of course not, it was because he couldn't say this. Akai Asuka was a vampire, a part of the blood clan. If he revealed the truth, the story would become considerably complicated. But if he lied, he would lose their trust when that lie was exposed.

But Ryuzaki's hesitation was but a moment.

“We are not related to the vampires of Red Moon.”

He looked his opponent in the eyes and clearly declared. Satomi pulled his tail with all her strength. *That hurts.*

“That was wrong of us to not inform you of the vampire's existence last night, I guess there's no merit in revealing the information at this point. But it's a fact that we're troubled because of Inugami's missing.”

“And what of the possibility that Inugami-dono's missing itself is untruth?”

Suspicion fills Welkano-shi's eyes less than his attempt to test us. I don't think it's 'suspicion will raise bogies', it's probably something comes from a merchant's instinct — always keeping in mind a safe choice.

“I mean, what good is there even if I give false information here? Welkano-san.”

“Well, I guess you're right.”

Welkano easily accepted Ryuzaki's complaint.

The one making a grim face was chieftain Bergel. He was probably examining Ryuzaki's words — *Vampire is on this island.*

As long as one believed in yesterday conversation, he was a virtuous human, not too suitable for outwitting one another. That in itself might be an act, but that wasn't case if one just looked at Satomi's reaction. Right now, he probably was earnestly thinking whether or not the information Ryuzaki had told him was true.

It seemed like he would speak the concealed information with just one more push.

“However, it won’t be so calm now if there are really vampires on this island.”

Welkano continued without changing his expression.

“The missing case that occurred periodically as well, could these vampires have been the cause? Chieftain.”

“Yea.... I also thought of that possibility.”

Chieftain Bergel groaned deeply.

“Chieftain Bergel, I shall ask again,”

Ryuzaki peered in to his eyes and said.

“Inugami disappeared during last night welcome party. Do you know anything about it?”

“...I, do not know anything, about her disappearance itself.”

After a slight delay, he spoke in a strangely full of implication manner. Hitomi didn’t pull Ryuzaki’s tail.

“...Then, you know something else?”

“I cannot answer that.”

Saying so, chieftain Bergel looked at Ryuzaki. Evident distrustful emotion dwelled in his black eyes.

Chieftain Bergel was doubting Ryuzaki. No, not just Ryuzaki, he was doubting the entirety of 2nd year class 4. At least until last night, he hadn’t shown this kind of response. It certainly wasn’t because they left the welcome party midway through, probably.

In just one night, his attitude had made a violent change. If one was to say that Ryuzaki had bought his distrust because he had been keeping secrets, that wasn’t the case either. The chieftain attitude even before that wasn’t much different from now.

Is Chieftain Bergel hiding matters about Inugami’s disappearance because he’s doubting us?

Then what has made him doubt us this much?

“Chieftain Bergel,”

Ryuzaki kept a steady gaze on the chieftain, he had decided to ask a bit of a leading question.

“Could it be, you have heard about Inugami missing case from someone else?”

“Such a thing..., didn’t happen.”

Satomi tautly pulled Ryuzaki’s tail.

«Tomorrow morning, their representative might come to your house, chieftain.»

Yesterday night, Tokihara had whispered that kind of thing into chieftain Bergel’s ears.

That happened when the cleaning up after the welcome party had completely finished. As usual, chieftain Bergel talked to Tokihara about various things without showing even a shred of wariness. Naturally, he had previously been told not to reveal Tokihara’s name to them. It was difficult to make a reason for this, but Tokihara normally hardly ever showed himself to foreigners, so it wasn’t something too strange either.

The explanation he had given chieftain Bergel was something along the line of *«It’s not desirable to have my name and appearance known by too many people due to a magical issue»*. Tokihara was in charge of Delf Island’s accounting, but most of the islanders believed him to be a shaman come from outside.

While having a drinking bout using the remaining wine, Tokihara listened to the chieftain’s story about the welcome party.

The chieftain thought it was strange that that bunch had left the welcome party midway through.

Looking at the chieftain who was tilting his head, Tokihara thought: *this is getting a little troublesome.*

That that bunch has left the welcome party midway through is clearly related to the dog chained in the mansion basement. They must have discussed about how to look for that lost dog. May be even the existence of us vampires has been sniffed out.

*This human is a good-natured chieftain. He may even organize a search party if that bunch says something like «**One of our friends has gone missing**». If it comes to that, the one who would be disadvantageous is our side. Moreover, if that bunch got any closer to the islanders than this, it may even hinder the plan to capture the Queen's person. I need to plant the seed of suspicion toward that bunch in the chieftain.*

«Tomorrow morning, their representative might come to your house, chieftain.»

Therefore, Tokihara whispered so into the chieftain's ears.

«Please do not believe them immediately no matter what they say. Especially in case they said that one of their friends has gone missing.»

«Why? Is there any relation to how they left the party halfway through?»

«Because I haven't met them directly, I have no proof. However,»

Saying so, Tokihara floated a gentle smile.

«There's something absolutely suspicious about those guys. That big black iron ship that has anchored offshore. That looked similar to the magic battleship that the shipyard under direct control of the Empire has monopoly on.»

«Are you saying they're from the Empire?»

«It's purely a possibility.»

Despite saying *it's not certain, it's just a guess, I have no proof, etc.*, Tokihara skillfully guided the chieftain's mentality in that direction.

«But there's not so many trainers who can freely train monsters and made them abide. Except for the Empire's Army, there are only the magic beast trainers of the Gladiatorial Principality and the riding dragon trainers of the Dragon Knight Kingdom.»

The good-natured chieftain of the southern island instantly believed that.

«I see.... There's also the possibility of them being the Empire's monsters...»
«In that case, their purpose may be to prepare to take control of Albadanba that has yet to bend to their will.»

Several naval battle between Albadanba and the Empire had unfolded before. Although one can say that Albadanba was no more than an uncivilized little

country when looking at the Empire's military power, the sea nearby was the habitat of the Sea King, and the sea currents which was created by that Sea King had thwarted the Empire's invasion countless time.

Therefore, the Empire had sent in monsters on a warship in order to trick the eyes of the Sea King who had strong animosity toward them, Tokihara grandiosely spoke. If thinking calmly, there was no meaning whatsoever to put them on a warship, nevertheless, chieftain Bergel didn't doubt it. [Notes]

«First thing they may try to do is probably cutting down the man power of Delf Island. That's why, please never trust them no matter what they say.»

«Even in case they said their friends is missing?»

«They may try to reduce the people by having a search party formed. And then, I think it's better to make sure the islanders do not approach the aforementioned battleship since it's dangerous. We should fish at the east or south side of the island.»

Naturally, this was to clear out the hindrances in his plan to capture the Queen's person. Of course, Tokihara wouldn't participate in the operation. The job would be done by the other Pawns, they were to incapacitate the Queen and carry her to his residence. And then they just need to swiftly transport her to the King's place.

Because that bunch might come to take her back, he should take her blood as an insurance. Even in the worst case that the Queen herself was rescued, as long as he could deliver her blood to the King, the Queen's body would become the King's.

And so, his act that was close to brainwashing the chieftain ended with this. Before leaving the chieftain house, he made sure to told the chieftain to detain those guys for as long as possible and try to extract information from them if ever they came to the chieftain's house.

The operation was to be carried out during the day. The time when the men of the island went fishing. The time when the merchants brought in the merchandise for the trade fair. Naturally, those guys was going to participate in the trade fair as well, so even the monsters that protected that warship would also become thinner. Additionally, it would also be the time when their representative — the dragonewt — visited chieftain Bergel's house.

“Well, since that’s the case, let’s do this swiftly.”

Standing in front of the Pawns that was left under his control, Tokihara said so.

“Just in case, here’s the list of monsters that require special attention according to Akeno-sama’s report. Everyone escaped from that old castle, so I think you already knew about it though.”

What they need to be most careful of was the skeleton and slime duo. These two were the only one among those guys that had reached Phase 3. Reaching Phase 3 meant that those two would be helpless so long as one could control the Queen’s body, but they were still the most formidable enemy at the moment. Because even Knight Suou was easily brought down, Pawn-class vampires like them would be powerless.

After that were the *‘hit’* species monsters even among the ones who reached Phase 2, these guys were opponents that could oppose them even when alone. The ogre, the dragonewt, the pharaoh. Fighting these guys one-on-one would be risky.

“The operation will fail at the moment we spot the skeleton ... but well, they are apparently loitering on the island so that’s okay. Please also be cautious in case there are 2 or more among the ogre, the dragonewt and the pharaoh. If it’s just 1, I think you will manage somehow.”

5 Pawns nodded while looking over the documents.

He was going to have these 5 were head over to the warship anchored offshore and capture the Queen’s person. As far as he had heard, the Queen hadn’t gotten off the ship even once. About 2 months had passed since those guys came to this world. If she hadn’t sucked human’s blood even once until now, it wasn’t so strange even if she got blood crave illness right about now. Beside, he was having the Pawns equip weapons smeared with the dog’s saliva. Because a werewolf’s saliva had the effect of returning vampire factors to ground state, it should be more than enough to stop the movement of the Queen who was already in a bad condition.

They was going to force all of her factors to ground state — which would suspend her body’s functions — then capture her person.

“Tokihara-san, what will you do?”

1 of the Pawns asked.

“I will remain at the residence for a while. It will be troublesome if we let that dog escape after all. ...Ah, that’s right, Asaake-san.”

After Tokihara answer the question, he handed over certain objects. Asaake received them with a perplexed expression. Those were a bottle filled with blood and a knife.

“Umm, these are.... Tokihara-san.”

“I think I told you. It’s our secret weapon. Because it is exactly as written on the label, please make use of it effectively.”

If it was Asaake who had been working under Akeno before, he would more or less know how to make use of these.

“Well then, I look forward to working with you.”

There was a bit of him that felt like he was hurrying the situation too much, but if he thought about the sparse defense of the warship, this day, this moment was probably the best chance. In the Maritime United Nations Albadanba, the lurking vampires had finally started their action.

Chapter 55 — Prepare for Battle

Several hours passed as they advanced while continuing a steady questioning of flowers, mushrooms and plants.

Kyousuke and the others arrived at a building situated in a place slightly away from a village of Delf Island.

It was a wooden building not so different from ones you might see in other villages, but its size was quite big. The place where Inugami Hibiki was brought to was this house. There was no definite evidence for it, but they couldn't ascertain it either. Hiding in the bushes, every member of the team intently watched the building.

“Although I want to rush in right now...”

Said Rin.

“Right.... According to the original plan, we will return to the village and call the rescue unit.”

“We have to report about that ‘Toki’ as well.”

If thinking about Inugami's safety, time would be too precious to do such a thing. But this alone was a matter decided by the class. Kyousuke team could only break through honestly from the front, so when it came to an infiltration mission, Nekomiya who could travel from shadow to shadow was much more excellent. [Rants]

And because of that, we have to hurry back. The moment Kyousuke was about to say so.

“Umm ... Utsurogi-kun...”

Hanazono Hana directed to Kyousuke a gaze in which some kind of determination was concealed.

“We.... I think we should stay here though...”

“What (are you saying)?”

“The vampires may come out from the house after we leave.... Besides, our movement speed is not so fast, therefore...”

Shokuzura and Kinogasa shook their body vertically, it's their nodding gesture.

Certainly, movement speed was a big problem. Akira could fly, Kyouzuke and Rin could combine and obtain a strong body, they could march at a speed close to double that of humans, but alraune, roper, living mushroom, all of these species had movement speed lower than human. Whether leaving them behind or not would make a considerable difference.

Kyouzuke was thankful for their proposal, but there was a house in which the vampires were lurking right in front of him. To abandon his classmates here was....

"Don't worry. If something happens, the tentacles will protect us."

When Shokuzura said so, several colorful tentacles that were lurking in the forest wriggled and showed themselves.

"Kyouzuke, let's depend on their proposal here."

"Akira..."

"The rescue unit is also organized centered on agile members with high movement speed. If we just hurry, it shouldn't even take an hour for a round trip."

"...Understood."

Finally, Kyouzuke nodded.

Everyone of these three who was going to remain were monsters that were skillful at hiding in the forest. They would never be found so easily unless they themselves went on the offensive. It would be only one hour, he would returned immediately together with the rescue unit and have them storm in. If speaking of what was worrying him, it would be the battle that would follow after that. Judging from the shape of the house, the vampires had to have some kind of connections with the islanders. From the point of view of these islanders, the fact that they were going to fight with these vampires would never be a welcome matter. Things might be different if Ryuzaki could skillfully persuade the chieftains though.

Would the name '*Toki*' that they obtained truly brought things to a positive direction?

"First of all, let's hurry. Hanazono and everyone, please stay still. Absolutely

still.”

“Yup.”

“Leave it to us.”

“Rin, Akira, we’ll go back to the village at full speed. Let’s go.”

“Gotcha.”

“Sure.”

And so, Kyousuke’s body slipped through the tree and he quickly started running.

“Ahh, please wait Himemizu!”

Shokuzura’s voice came calling from behind. Kyousuke reflexively stopped his feet. As it was, Rin who was coiling around Kyousuke’s body asked:

“Ehh, you mean, me?”

“Ahh, it’s you.”

Shokuzura meekly announced this:

“You’re going to come back anyway, right? So leave Inugami’s clothes behind.”

In the end, drawing out anymore information from the chieftain at that stage was impossible. Ryuzaki had to temporarily ended the talk and changed to the discussion about the trade fair. The suspicions in chieftain Bergel’s eyes regarding Ryuzaki wasn’t cleared, nevertheless, just this discussion itself was finished without a hitch.

“What do you think?”

In a corner of the village, Ryuzaki consulted with his friends.

The discussion itself had entered a break, but there was another discussion in the afternoon which would also invite the chieftains of other islands. *We will prepare lunch, so do stay in the village*, so said chieftain Bergel. If one had to say, then it felt like the chieftain want to detain Ryuzaki group here in the village, not letting them return to the heavy cruiser branch school.

“Chieftain-san is lying, but.... He doesn’t know about the vampires, right...?”

“You’re right, however, he is doubting us.”

Putting her hand on her shapely chin, Sakuma seriously pondered.

Students presently in this village were the 3 people of Ryuzaki, Satomi, Sakuma, and then the 5 people of Inugami rescue unit: Nekomiya, Saruwatari, Kagoi, Karasuma and Goubayashi. 8 people in total. The search unit by means of questioning were Kyousuke group of 5. The ones who remained in the branch school were Akai, Harao, Kaoruko and some base staff members such as Sugiura, everyone else was carrying items to the plaza in order to prepare for the trade fair.

Nekomiya — being very popular with the village children as usual — was being jostled about, no she was being mobbed; As for Saruwatari, even though he should just give up already, he still tried to teach baseball to the children and made them draw back as a result. Other members put their heads together in the discussion with Ryuzaki.

“As I thought, there’s no mistake in thinking that the person who whispered various things to the chieftain is a vampire.”

Goubayashi crossed his arms and said, in response to his words, everyone nodded.

“So that means the reason why chieftain-san wants to detain Ryuzaki-kun and us here is also because of the vampire’s instruction?”

“If that’s the case, then we should not be here.... But where should we move our people to...”

What was the vampires’ purpose? Because they hardly knew anything about it, they couldn’t move carelessly.

The big favorite would be the branch school. Harao had been stationed there just in case. If the opponent only had combat ability of Pawn class, he would easily intercept them.

In the search unit there were Kyousuke, Rin as well as Akira. They were presently the highest combat potential within 2nd year class 4.

Regarding combat potential, the most anxious place would be the preparation of the trade fair where nearly half of the students had been assigned. But they couldn’t think of any merits for the vampires to attack that place. Even supposing the vampires thought to kidnap the students like the time with

Kogane, attacking the trade fair venue where there were also the merchants and other islanders and exposing themselves, was a minus. All the more so if the vampires occupy a position where they could whisper stuffs into the chieftains ears.

At this point in time, Ryuzaki and the others didn't even taken into account the possibility of there being several enemy vampires.

Delf Island wasn't wide at all. Moreover, the missing cases that seemed to involved the vampires happened at the frequency of 1 person every 1 to 2 months. They had subconsciously assumed that there would be only 1 vampire lurking on this island. [Notes]

Just at that moment.

"GYAaa!"

"Wha—what's that!?"

Screams echoed from a corner of the village, reflexively raising their face, they look over there: leaping out from a part of the dense forest was a skeleton, it was cladding a blue slime all over its body and accompanied by a fire ball which was floating nearby. *Who?* No need to ask, it was Kyousuke.

"Utsurogi!"

"We made you wait!"

ZUSAaaa, raising a cloud of sand, the flying Kyousuke landed.

"You have learned how to make quite the cool entrant there..."

"No, well, yeah. It's Akira's training..."

Kyousuke glanced at Akira who was flying right beside him.

The islanders who remained in the village appeared to be stealing glances at Kyousuke. He thought it was not an atmosphere suitable for secret talks at all, and at that moment, «*Attentio—n!*», Nekomiya shouted and started performing tricks, thus, everyone gazes gathered onto her in the blink of an eyes. As expected, an aspiring actress was different.

"I don't see Hanazono and the others."

While looking around, Ryuzaki said. Kyousuke nodded.

“As the person themselves wish, I have asked them to wait there. For now, I have several things to report.”

Saying so, Kyousuke raised one finger.

“First is Inugami. Inugami has likely been kidnapped by a group of 2 men who seem to be vampires. Now, she is being confined in a wooden house outside a village.”

“Group of 2...?”

Ryuzaki knitted his brows quizzically. Not just Ryuzaki, everyone else was the same.

“Yes. It’s 2. If we assume that they are vampires, then there are a minimum of 2 vampires on this island.”

“This is dangerous.”

Goubayashi murmured.

“Even for me and Ryuzaki, it will be difficult to take on 2 or 3 Pawns by ourselves.”

That also applied to Harao. The ones who were left in charge of the heavy cruiser branch school’s protection were Harao and Kaoruko. Aside from them were members whose combat ability couldn’t be expected much. When it came to being attacked by 2 or more vampires, it would be doubtful whether or not they could protect Akai.

Sakuma suddenly started fidgeting. She was probably worrying about her close friend.

However, Kyousuke continued.

“It’s only one of those vampires, but his name is probably ‘*Toki*’.”

“Toki...?”

“Perhaps ... not just Toki but names such as Tokino, Tokihara, etc.... According to the message Inugami left behind, it’s ‘*Toki*’.”

Toki. A name that sounded like Japanese.

“For now Utsurogi. We also have a few things that was made clear.”

Ryuzaki raised his face and revealed to Kyousuke group the information

obtained from the conversation with the chieftain.

First, the chieftain was hiding something about Inugami disappearance. The chieftain himself didn't know about the vampires existence. The chieftain had some suspicions regarding themselves. Those suspicions were probably things someone had whispered in his ears.

Putting together these information, they speculated that there was a vampire who hid its true character and whispered convenient information to the chieftain. Kyouzuke, Rin and Akira nodded then started ruminating the new information.

"It's highly possible that the vampire who whisper strange information to chieftain-san is that Toki, isn't it?"

Unyon, stretching out her body from Kyouzuke's, Rin said.

"For now, I will try to shake up the chieftain again in the conference this afternoon. I think I'll bring out the name Toki as well."

Ryuzaki's words were answered by a silent nod of Satomi the satori.

Kyouzuke group had discovered the vampires' house, which meant it might devolve to a battle after this. If the vampire was in a position to whisper stuffs into the chieftain's ears, then unskillfully hiding information would only bring disadvantage to themselves.

Naturally, if they felt like it, Ryuzaki and the others had enough power to forcefully silence every islanders of Albadanba. But it wasn't as if they wanted to do that.

"Ne~, Utsurogi-kun..."

With an unusually grim expression, Sakuma said.

"What is it? Sakuma."

"What are those vampires trying to do ... you don't know, do you?"

"Nn, I don't..."

Kyouzuke nodded. This time, Sakuma — still didn't relax her expression — informed Ryuzaki:

"I will return to the branch school for a bit."

“I don’t mind, but...”

“I’ll try consulting various things I heard here with Asuka-chan. That person called Toki as well, she may know something about him.”

So she said, but that was probably not everything.

Sakuma was worrying about the possibility of the heavy cruiser branch school being attacked by 2 vampires or even more than that. In such a case, only Harao and Kaoruko were naturally insufficient to defend against that. Not that anything would change even if Sakuma alone went there, but she was unable to suppress her feelings and thinking logically was already pointless.

“Then I’ll go too.”

The one who said that was Goubayashi. Sakuma looked at him with a surprised look.

“Goubayashi-kun will?”

“Yea. Combat ability-wise, it would’ve been better if Utsurogi goes, however, Utsurogi have to guide Nekomiya group after this. Conversely speaking, there’s no need for me to go, now that Utsurogi is here.”

Kyousuke also nodded. It was possible that several vampires had remained in the house where Inugami was confined, but if it was Kyousuke, he would be fine even in that case. It had already been proven that Extreme Cross possessed combat ability far surpassing others after all.

To sum it up, the members here would be newly divided like this:

Ryuzaki and Satomi.

They were going to participate in the meeting with the chieftains after this. The role of this group was to shake up the chieftain. The purpose had change from the stage of ‘*extracting information*’ to the next stage. Now, for the chieftain who harbor doubts about 2nd year class 4, they was going to slap all the ‘*truth*’ they got into his face and changed their image.

Originally, Sakuma was supposed to be added to this group. Even if she couldn’t use «*Temptation*» by her own will, Ryuzaki was expecting to lower the humans’ vigilance against them. However, he decided to respect the will of the person herself.

Kyousuke, Rin, Akira, Nekomiya, Saruwatari, Kagoi and Karasuma.

They were going to rescue Inugami who was probably being confined in the vampires' house. The chances that the vampires were all out of the house was not zero, but this team was very likely going to have to fight. Depending on the circumstances, Kyousuke and Rin might need to clean things up quickly with Extreme Cross.

Sakuma and Goubayashi.

They were going to return to the heavy cruiser branch school and act as Akai's guards as well as exchange the obtained information. If one was to assume the reason the chieftain was trying to detain Ryuzaki group was to make it easier for the vampires to move, then the first thing they was going to aim at would be Akai at the branch school. In case several vampires came to attack, it was difficult to think just Harao and Kaoruko would be able to fight against those, speaking frankly, they didn't even know how much better the situation would be even with these two as reinforcement.

This was the most dangerous position.

"We will also go to the branch school once we manage to rescue Inugami."

"Right, we should do that."

Akira nodded to Kyousuke's words.

"Saa-chan, don't push yourself."

Being told so by Rin, Sakuma floated a little bitter smile and nodded.

"Yeah.... Himemizu-san, Utsurogi-kun and everyone ... please come as soon as possible."

"Well, I think it's possible to hold them back if there are about 3. Anymore than that and I don't know what will happen."

This remark was Goubayashi's. It was as reliable as it could be, but he probably didn't mean that he would challenge 3 vampires by himself. He meant that 3 was the limit after cooperating with Harao, Kaoruko and Sakuma. Moreover, limited to the case where there were only Pawn-class opponents. In case the opponent was Knight or Bishop class, it would probably take the four of them their all just to hold back one enemy.

"As I thought, the place in the most danger is the branch school..."

Kyousuke's voice was filled with slight distress. Because fighting ability couldn't be divided, it couldn't be helped that the arrangement would be biased. And the fact that the burden would be concentrated on Kyousuke group as well, that couldn't be helped. Ryuzaki ground his teeth.

This was never something desirable. However, there was absolutely many situations where he couldn't help but rely on their outstanding combat ability.

"I will be waiting."

"Sure, leave it to me."

In response to Sakuma's words, Kyousuke strongly nodded.

"Apparently, the talk has finished while we're not here."

"Being left out and settle in the upper right corner of the group photo, that too is youth."

"We're not really being left out though..."

Finally, Nekomiya who was being jostled about by the children and Saruwatari had returned.

Everyone once again nodded to each other and started taking their respective actions.

In the Maritime United Nations Albadanba, the islanders of Delf Island still didn't know that a battle was about to occur. However, the battle preparation was steadily being completed.

Chapter 56 — Wrath of Harao

Okama Kaoru met them around the time of lower grades of primary school. Kaoru at that time wasn't an okama or anything, he merely got quality for it. It was only at the degree of preferring to mingle with girls and playing houses since kindergarten. His mother was skillful at housework, being raised looking at her back, he had learned both sewing and cooking to a certain degree by the time he entered first grade of primary school, and acquired *girl power*. Kaoru didn't hate moving his body, nevertheless, he wasn't too enthusiastic in frolicking around by playing soccer and game of tag in the school yard full of mud. On a certain day, he called out to Sakuma Sachiko who was obediently reading books in a corner of the classroom and Akai Asuka who was only vacantly gazing out the window.

He didn't remember what kind of topic they talked about at that time, but well, their relationship started from that time.

Kaoru had never said it out loud, but he thought that Akai Asuka of those days were a considerably strange kid.

If speaking of how strange, it would be that she never put out her best effort in anything. He had never ever seen her doing anything seriously or desperately. On record, there were many boys who could run faster than Akai, but in contrast to the boys who gritted their teeth and sprinted with all their strength, she simply ran slightly behind them with a nonchalant face. That was the girl called Akai Asuka.

Well, it was just fine if the person herself wanted to take such a stance though.

Akai was indeed strange, but even Kaoru was quite mature for a boy his age, therefore, he didn't try suggesting to her that she should make a serious effort, not even once.

Only, she was a child at that time, which means she wasn't so good at '*hiding her seriousness*' and various troubles had come because of it.

When was it? There used to be mixed-gender soccer. Probably around the

time when they had yet to enter upper grades of primary school. Precisely because they were at the stage where the difference in physical strength between boys and girls wasn't so obvious that there was mixed-gender soccer. That day, Sakuma Sachiko was a spectator due to her poor physical condition, but Akai and Kaoru made a promise with that Sakuma.

«We'll take 3 goals from the opposing team».

If one had even the slightest bit of knowledge about soccer, they would understand just how ridiculous a promise that was, but the girls at that time wasn't so knowledgeable.

Immediately after the game started, Akai Asuka who usually appeared listless suddenly showed agile movements. Nevertheless, her expression remained nonchalant as usual, so it probably meant that she didn't get serious just yet. Her handling of the ball was amateurish, her dribbling wasn't skillful at all, but still, she was able to plunder the ball from the boys affiliated to the local soccer boys group, then without allowing anyone to follow her, she carried it till before the goal, and shot.

That was 1 goal.

While the other children and even the teachers was still dumbfounded, Akai Asuka expressionlessly made a V-sign to Sakuma and Kaoru.

In exactly the same way, she got 2 more goals. As promised, Akai Asuka had scored 3 goals in a blink of an eye.

The problem was what happened after that.

Akai obviously started to ease up.

Not that she blatantly played hooky on the field. She did go get the ball, did try making pass. But her movements were obviously shoddy compared to before. No, if one was to watch without any prior information, they might see a heart-warming scene of a girl who played with her best effort in a soccer game she was unfamiliar with.

But if they saw that god-like movements some time ago, they would inevitably judge that she was cutting corners.

As a result, Akai's team lost with the final score of 5 to 3. 4 out of the 5 goals of the opposing team was taken away by a boy who was affiliated with the local

soccer boy group.

Because that certainly did happen in a physical education class, after class, a boy approached Akai. Being toyed with by her, he tried to snap back somehow, but even so, he couldn't catch up and after Akai started getting shoddy in the second half, he achieved a hat trick of scoring 4 goals unaided, it was that youngster of the soccer boy group.

The class ended, he rushed over to behind Akai who was talking friendlily with Sakuma, he tapped her shoulder, then, when she turned around, he slapped her cheek, loading into it all his strength.

The boy was immediately dragged away to the staff room by a teacher; at that time, Akai, for the first time, got to know that «*There are humans who got angry when you go easy on them*».

The biggest trouble was about that incident? Even after that, small troubles occurred several times, and Akai Asuka's way of hiding her own strength got rapidly more skillful. In the end, even till Kaoru reached this age, he had never saw Akai bringing out all her power.

"Well, because Asuka is like that that I thought there were some circumstances, but I never would have thought that she's a vampire."

Today as well, the sky of Maritime United Nations Albadanba was clear. The sun rose up high, cool waves were rushing ashore. One couldn't heard the cries of sea birds, but this place seemed exactly like a southern island where one would go to take a vacation on. Naturally, its true state wasn't such a romantic thing.

On the deck, Okama Kaoru was leaning his back on the side of the ship. He said:

"That's how it goes. How is it? Isn't it boring?"

"It's very interesting."

The one who said so and puffed up his chest was Harao Masaki the pharaoh.

Kaoru and Harao had been entrusted the defense of the heavy cruiser branch school. To be more accurate, the defense of Akai Asuka who was resting in the branch school. Both Kaoru and Harao had volunteered themselves for this role,

but it doesn't mean that the two had built a friendly relationship with each other. *Tell me an interesting story*, Harao suddenly made an unreasonable demand, so Kaoru started talking about the old tale of Akai.

"However ... that Akai now is weakening ... to the point that she can't get serious anymore..."

"Seem so. This is the first time I see Asuka like that."

Akai was currently suffering from '*Blood Crave Illness*' due to not sucking human's blood. This is a vampire-specific case that causes a bad condition in their whole body due to the spiritual impurities that circulate in their blood. That Akai was in danger of being attacked by the vampires who were hiding on this island. Which is why the 2 people of Kaoru and Harao had offered to protect her.

"The red moon is hiding, tis power lost.... Is't good or bad omen.... I doth not know...."

"So poetic as usual, you..."

As he was speaking, he recalled about Sakuma. Sakuma Sachiko was currently visiting the village on the island together with Ryuzaki. It was to investigate Welkano-shi of the maritime caravan and chieftain Bergel. As an insurance, Sakuma was to use «*Temptation*» if the talk went sour; she herself had finally shown a positive attitude, but well, Sakuma probably didn't have the personality to use «*Temptation*» on unknown people, Kaoru thought.

Nonetheless, if speaking of whether or not she could use it on someone familiar, that was an entirely different problem. After all, it is an act that intervenes and causes impurities somewhere in the consciousness, what it does was close to temporary brainwashing. Judging from a human's code of ethics, this ability was clearly one you must not use on your acquaintances.

On that point, Sakuma herself had to have some degree of compromise, but well, as it was, she was but half a succubus.

"(Well, I suppose it's fine. Half a succubus will do.)"

Previously, she had been half-jokingly instigated by Kaoru, so Kaoru was feeling responsible for that.

But, as a result of thinking variously, like he originally thought, Sakuma didn't have the personality to use «*Temptation*» on anyone. Forgetting all that about the prerequisite of a succubus, and participating in battle as a magic attacker seemed better for her.

She did acquire a fancy cooperative technique with Kyouzuke called '*Big Burst*' after all.

"O Okama..."

As Kaoru was vacantly thinking, Harao called out to him.

"What. No, that's fine but you, you still won't call me Kaoruko huh..."

"Signs of evil blood is adrift..."

"Hah...?"

"Be prepared. Tis enemies."

Before Harao's words ended, an invisible power thrust Kaoru's body away.

An attack from the enemy he had mentioned wasn't what pushed Kaoru. It was telekinesis power of Harao himself. At the point where Kaoru was just now, dark red lightning dimly crackled. Harao held an ankh in his right hand, keeping that aloft in the air, he gazed through the golden mask at the human shadows floating in the sky.

Yes, human shadows, floating.

Cladding in black armor and growing red wings, it was the devils.

"Red Wing...!"

Kaoru squeezed out his voice.

"The pharaoh and the incubus.... One need special caution, one caution, is it...?"

Red winged devils, Red Moon, namely, vampires. Those guys right now was floating above the heavy cruiser branch school, right before Harao and Kaoru's eyes.

That was still okay. It was within their assumption. *Those guys may come*, they had predicted so and that was why they were here now.

If there was a problem, it was about one thing:

“Five of them...!? I haven’t heard anything about this...”

His voice slightly cramped Kaoru muttered.

Yes, over there were 5 vampires with black armor and red wings, they had gathered together and lined up.

According what he had heard, the vampires who had that black armor and red wings were called ‘*Pawns*’, they were the lowest grade soldiers even among the vampires. However, when Kaoru and Goubayashi battled one of these guys in the past, they couldn’t stand a chance against them at all, Goubayashi had suffered a serious injury in order to let him escape.

Not only that. These guys once pulverized Kyouusuke’s body, kidnapped Kogane. Even with several combat personnel bundled together, they were formidable enough to completely disregard it. That was a Pawn. Because they were ‘*Soldiers*’, it was natural that there would be several of them, but 5 of them....

“I think it’s pointless, but let’s advice you just in case.”

One among the 5 vampires floating in the sky raised his hand and solemnly declared.

“Cease your futile resistance and capitulate. We won’t treat you badly.”

So it comes to this? These guys still didn’t give up capturing us.

Harao turned his left hand around his back, he kept the ankh in his right hand aloft and didn’t try to say anything. Kaoru took a glance at that Harao, and then he looked up at the 5 Pawns and bluffed to his best effort.

“Before that, let me ask. What is it that you 5 have gathered and come to our branch school for?”

No matter how confident an attitude he tried to show, there was naturally a limit. Being attacked simultaneously by this many Pawns was outside the scope of their assumption. Many students went out from the branch school, he couldn’t expect any decent war potential.

Even so, Kaoru bluffed.

One Pawn suddenly laughed and answered him this:

“Since you wish to know, we may as well answer. Our purpose is to capture

the Queen's person."

"Funn, is that so..."

Prediction comes true, is it? That's not too happy a story in this situation.

"In that case ... we declineee!!"

"In that case ... we declineee!!"

Kaoru gathered magic power in his right hand and invoked it together with a shout.

"«*Evil Flare*»!!"

The black flame he released, however, was very easily erased by a swing of a Pawn's right hand.

But Kaoru's attack didn't end at that point. With his magic invocation as the cue, several imps that were hiding on the deck shot magic at the 5 Pawns from all direction. Kaoru made a short chant again and shot attack magic one after another.

Attack magic cross-fired from every direction. But when the dense smoke cleared, the Pawns were, as expected, standing there uninjured.

"Ha ha ha, as I thought, this *Promotional Armor* is quite a robust magic tool."

One Pawn said that in an elated manner.

"As expected of Bishop Akeno's quality product. Both offense and defense are very excellent."

"But then, even without this armor, it won't take much time to clean up the small fries before us though."

The Pawns were having a carefree conversation, Kaoru couldn't feel even an atom of vigilance against themselves at all. *I guess it's natural. It's vexing but there's no need to be vigilant. The difference in our true strength is too overwhelming, even if our side is superior in terms of number, there is nothing we can do at all.*

However,

"Harao-kun, why are you doing nothing? Let's get them."

Guu, tightly clenching his fist, Kaoru glared at the Pawns. He didn't think it would be effective, but he tried to use «*Temptation*» anyway. Deciding his aim to be a Pawn that he casually met eyes with, he pulled out the maximum power of temptation and loaded it into his eyes. He forced the opponent's brain to be aware of himself.

But, the instant the Pawn smile fearlessly, he felt as if the magic power ran counter-current in his whole body, Kaoru's consciousness flew for a moment. He unintentionally staggered and leaned his hands on the side of the ship.

“«*Temptation*» won't have any effect.”

A Pawn proudly said.

“This armor's anti-magic and anti-curse are overwhelming. Unless we open our heart ourselves and accept the other party, «*Temptation*» won't have any effect.”

“Kuu...”

Even his trump card was sealed, he was even more helpless now. However, Akai was behind him, so he wasn't going to give way here. Kaoru again stood up straight and scolded his unmoving classmate.

“Harao-kun!”

“Noisy Okama...”

Using a little irritated tone, Harao said.

“I'm also anti the evil blood army.... The quadrangular pyramid barrier is constructed with the blessing of Nile River.... Thee shouldst witness the strength of Pyramid Power...”

“Py, Pyramid Power...?”

Kaoru inclined his head but that moment, he noticed a barrier-like something stretching around Harao.

That was deployed in a pyramid-shape, it was highly transparent and seemed to melt into the air but it definitely did manifest. It wasn't that the 5 Pawns were complacent and didn't come down. They were hindered in front of Harao's barrier and couldn't come down.

“Isn't this amazing...”

“But, I can’t keep it up anymore.”

Simultaneously with Harao’s announcement, the pyramid-shaped barrier started cracking.

“.....—!!”

Parin, like a joke, the barrier broke. That moment, the Pawns vigorously swooped down on this place.

“Intercept them, Harao-kun!”

“This too, is a nay.”

“Heh...?”

Harao created an invisible force field with the ankh brandished in his right hand, the Pawns’ swoop was held back for just an instant. Immediately afterward, Kaoru’s body gently floated in the air, he was snugly thrown into a golden coffin which came flying from out of nowhere.

“Ah, hey, wait ... Harao-kun!? Hara...”

Bakun, the coffin’s lid closed tightly. Even if Kaoru beat it from the inside, it only made *gan gan* sound and naturally didn’t budge.

“The enemy is a threat.... You, as I degree, be mine eyes, be mine ears. Go convey and summon.”

At the same time as Harao launched the coffin with Kaoru locked up within toward the island, the swooping down Pawns made a simultaneous attack toward Harao. The vampires’ sharp claws continuously tore apart the decoration and bandages adorning Harao’s body.

The vampires immediately flew toward the cabin in one go, but Harao brandished the ankh and teleported in front of the door leading to the cabin. An arm a Pawn thrust out was intercepted by a telekinesis wall.

That Pawn clicked his tongue.

“What foolishness is this...?”

“No one shalt disturb mine friends’ slumber.”

This was the cabin Akai currently rested in. And the door leading to it was perfectly blocked by Harao’s telekinesis.

“You want to die huh. Even though we’ve told you we’ll let you live if you just stay out of our way.”

The Pawn muttered so, his voice betrayed a little irritation.

Pawn-class vampires, number: 5. However a hit pieces, a hit ability he pulled, however freely could he manipulate that ability, even if this was Harao Masaki, this number was not something he could deal with by clashing with them head on. However, in the face of this battle with no chance of winning, Harao first locked up Kaoru in the coffin and let him escape in order to look for reinforcement, next, in his effort to earn even a bit of time, he blockaded the passage.

You want to die? The Pawn’s question was reasonable. He still showed this much blatant defiance will in front of this overwhelming different in ability, that is to say, even if his head was sent flying, he wouldn’t be able to complain.

However, Harao puffed up his chest and said.

“I am Harao. With the moonrise the soul shalt sleep, with the sunrise a new life shalt be granted. Harao shalt never die. Thee lowborn blood clan shalt never disturb mine friends’ slumber.”

It was something that the 5 Pawns were completely unaware of, but the word ‘*friends*’ Harao said in this place was not necessarily indicating just Akai.

The one whose slumber he was trying to protect, was the owner of the altar enshrined in the dining room. For him, the ship’s interior was something akin to an imperial tomb that promised the eternal slumber of his now deceased friend, Washio Kouta. The insolent bunch who tried to step inside with their dirty feet, Harao Masaki would never allow it.

Naturally, he also didn’t plan to taste that same sense of helplessness he tasted at that time when Washio died, ever again. That’s why, Harao was risking his life in order to protect both Akai’s person as well as the peace of Washio’s soul.

“O lowborn ones, thee can cometh. I am Harao. Learnth the warth of Harao with thy body.”

“Bring it on!!”

One of the Pawns, as if to say *I’m tired of this shit*, sprung at Harao.

On the other hand, Kyousuke group at that time was tracing their steps back to before a certain residence where Hanazono group was waiting, of course, with Nekomiya rescue unit in tow. Hanazono, Kinogasa, Shokuzura, everyone of them was safe, while concealing themselves within the tentacles, they had been waiting for Kyousuke's return.

"There's no big movement."

Looking at the residence, Hanazono said. A wriggling tentacle was wrapping around her entire body, but she didn't show any sign of hating it in particular. There are vines and ivies among plants as well, so her affinity with these kind of things might be high?

"No one leaves, no one enters, I means, not at present."

"Really..."

There was no doubt that Inugami was being detained in the cellar of that residence. They, in fact, still didn't have any positive proof if she was truly safe, but discussing that at this point was pointless. Even in the worst case that she wasn't safe, for Kyousuke and the others in this place, the choice of not going to help Inugami didn't exist.

The leader of the rescue unit — Nekomiya — looked around the surroundings. From the viewpoint of the petit Nekomiya whose overall length was but 50 cm, even if she was standing straight, her body was still being covered by the tall grass.

"By the way, Shokuzura, what you're holding now look like Inugami's clothes..."

"Ahh, I picked it up."

"Fumu. So that means, right now, Inugami is naked..."

The instant Nekomiya muttered that, everyone of the rescue unit stiffened with a twitch.

"It, it's youth..."

"That kinda thing, Saruwatari, is called puberty."

As Saruwatari muttered with quite a hard to describe expression, Kyousuke lightly retorted.

“Anyhow, we’ll be storming the residence now, so we can’t take those clothes.”

“I and Rin as well, we’ll be combining and rushing in as soon as it becomes a battle so it’s a bit...”

There no signs of human in the this area, and this was that Inugami they were talking about so she might unexpected not care about it, nevertheless, he felt awkward about making her — who was just rescued (not yet) — take a stroll outside still naked. Kyouusuke felt awkward, so he had zero confidence that he would be able to look straight at her, probably.

“There isn’t any need to look straight at her, Kyouusuke-kun.”

“Ah, you’re right.”

A severe retort came flying in from Rin.

“It’s best to brought Inugami to Hanazono after confirming her safety, isn’t it?”

Akira who was floating **fuyo fuyo** right beside Kyouusuke, uninterestedly propose. Such a him, Kagoi and Karasuma was looking at him like seeing something unbelievable.

“Hino.... You, even you are a healthy young boy ... right?”

“That, that’s right.... The heck did I do?”

“How was you able to propose such a thing so calmly and uninterestedly?”

Judging from Akira who kind of got this communication disorder, he was unexpectedly not used to being pressed by the two students without any malice in this way. The hue of his flaming body was hectically changing. It was probably the equivalent of shedding cold sweats all over his face in he was still human.

“Well, let’s leave it at that.”

Did she judge that it would just be bothersome to let the story develop anymore than this, standing around their feet, leader Nekomiya concluded the story.

“After sneaking in, if it comes to a battle with the vampires, we will call Utsurogi group. Please standby in the combine state.”

“What about the signal?”

“I will use shadow magic to give a sign. Can I borrow Utsurogi’s shadow for a bit.”

“I don’t mind, but.... You can do quite a skillful thing.”

The ‘*shadow magic*’ that Nekomiya used is a special form of magic that consume the shadow of the consented target as resources. This magic is said to be something a witch from somewhere once devised, and even now, it is still being transmitted to a portion of sacred beasts, including cait sith. When Nekomiya reincarnated as the species called cait sith, she had mastered this shadow magic as her monster skill.

By the way, the target will die if their shadow is used up, so it is a problem if you give your consent so thoughtlessly, but well, Kyousuke could only trust in Nekomiya’s management about that part.

“Now, let’s start storming in.”

Nekomiya solemnly declared in front of the group of 3 boys in puberty who was still imagining Inugami’s naked body and couldn’t calm down.

Kyousuke and the rest were was going to wait for her report while hiding among the tentacles in the forest.

Nekomiya brought along the assault team and stealthily approach the house’s wall, with her ability «*Shadow Passage*», they soundlessly intruded inside.

Chapter 57 — Storming in

Nekomiya Miya wasn't that well-informed about the illusory creature called Cait Sith.

However, she had read in several books that it was the origin of the motif for «*Puss in Boots*». That is to say, it was a fairy tale not from France but Ireland. Its appearance is not the middle of human and cat like Lycanthrope but closer to a cat.

Nekomiya, when she reincarnated as the cait sith, she didn't receive that much shock. Having made a name for herself as a child actor for a period of time, and now aiming to become an actress, for Nekomiya, life was role playing. Even if her appearance had become a cat, she never lose sight of herself that she should act.

The cait sith of this world has an ability revolving around shadows. If thinking that it is something expanded from the image of black cats, it cannot be said to be too off an ability. They can move from shadow to shadow, use magic with shadow as resources. Using up shadow and the target dies, but if you leave some behind, it will return to original. The shadow of this world has a magical phenomenon directly connected to one's life force, so thought Nekomiya, but she instantly forgot about it. *If gifted with power, I should just use it.*

When it came to infiltration mission, it surely was the place to make the best use of this ability.

Inugami, at Jindai High School cat vs dog factional conflict, was an existence similar to a thorn to her side, but at the same time, was also an important classmate.

“(Important classmate, is it?)”

Nekomiya — having just invaded into the house by using «*Shadow Passage*» — muttered to herself.

“(Even I have become quite sentimental)”

2nd year class 4 was a good class. There were many willful students with class

rep Ryuzaki being on top of the list, nevertheless, she felt that its unity was on the better side. Their unity had been exhibited properly at events such as school festival or field trip, Nekomiya also didn't hate lending a hand to such a class at all.

But still, she felt that it was a little different from the mentality to say that a classmate is *'important'*.

In the job that she had volunteered for right now, if she went about it unskillfully, being injured or even die would just be natural. She invaded enemy territory in order to save her kidnapped classmate. Even if she got high ability after reincarnating as a monster, when thinking calmly, one could only say she had gone crazy or something. On top of that, it was to save Inugami Hibiki whom she couldn't say she was close to at all.

Nevertheless, Nekomiya thought that what she was doing was only natural. Not just Nekomiya. The members she had selected, Saruwatari, Kagoi and Karasuma the 3 people had participated in this rescue mission without making an unpleasant face. Perhaps, the reaction would be the same even if she was to nominate other people.

Did my sense of crisis paralyze?

Did I become strange in the head?

The calm part of Nekomiya Miya showed itself and raised these questions. As a self-proclaimed cynic, Nekomiya had pondered about it for a whole night, but she got no answer in the end.

"Nekomiya, what's the matter?"

Karasuma Yoshitsune who reincarnated as a crow tengu, suppressed his voice and asked.

"It's nothing important."

Nekomiya closed her eyes and made a self-depreciatory smile.

"Come to think of it, we've come a long way', or so I'm thinking."

She ambiguously glossed over the change to her mind with such words.

Come to think of it, we've come a long way.

The various incidents that had happened so far were changing the awareness of the students — including herself — little by little. Therefore, she was able to announce candidacy for this kind of dangerous mission and participate. *I don't want to victims like Washio to come out ever again*, she too had that kind of feelings.

It can be expressed as their bond had deepened, but in the end, whatever kind of words she exhausted, it would still turn out to be cliché. As one who aimed to be a stage actress, she was going to acknowledge the fact that there was fewer people who can express themselves with words in this world. [Notes]

“Now then, it's indoor but ... heat and humidity aren't that different from outside...”

“The making improve the ventilation though.”

Karasuma said while restlessly looking around.

“However, there are less windows compared to other houses in the village.”

Kagoi silently opened his mouth and muttered.

“Yes, I'm also concerned about that. Naturally, there are windows, but ... they're not so many.”

“This is very unusual for a southern island.”

Nekomiya's words, Saruwatari also agreed.

There are things they don't want others to see, or there are things they don't want to let escape outside?

She made those conjectures. Neither of those had any positive proof, but along with the fact that Inugami was taken captive here, she had a sense that the appearance of the vampire lurking inside was getting clearer.

“Let's stop the idle chitchat here. Since the landlord may be here, let's carefully go look for Inugami.”

Everyone nodded to Nekomiya's instruction.

The place the crept into looked like the kitchen. There was an old fashion stove and a lidded water jug. Around here was unusual, there was a strangely properly made shelf and several seasoning bottles put on it.

“(Soy sauce, salt and pepper.... All of these seasonings has Japanese labels stuck on...)”

*Does this mean they regularly have allowances from the former world?
Absolutely enviable.*

“(There’s even chicken ramen. Their normal eating habit is not different from human huh)”

Immediately after coming out from the kitchen was the living room. In this Albadanba, it should have been popular to seat on the ground and have their meals, but as before, properly made desk and chairs were placed in the living room. Seeing that there were about 3 chairs, it probably meant that visitors among the islanders were regularly shown in.

In the living room, there were a power generator and an electric fan, furthermore, books that appeared to be from the original world, calculators, etc, were left there. The books were all about economics. Among the documents put on the shelf, there were many old fashioned ones. These too might become important clue in order to investigate Red Moon. Nekomiya reach her hand out, but naturally, the 50 centimeters her couldn’t reach it. Kagoi, being considerate, gathered several of those documents and gave them to her.

Lightly showing her gratitude with her hand, she opened the documents.

“(A company transfer of right note ... ‘s copy?)”

Apparently, the landlord here had been living quite a good life in the original world.

But, they weren’t things that could become any clues. Nekomiya shrugged her shoulder and returned them to Kagoi.

“(Nekomiya!)”

Saruwatari made his voice ride the wind and give it directionality, letting it reaching only Nekomiya and Kagoi’s ears. When she turned around, Saruwatari and Karasuma were beckoning her in the inner part of the room. She moved while making sure not to make any sound of footsteps, there, they opened the door in front of them and indicated the place ahead with their fingers.

“(Stairs to the basement...!)”

Nekomiya opened her eyes wide.

That there was a basement was a little unexpected. A light salty smell was being carried along with the chilly air. Perhaps it was connected to a submarine cavern? There was a little hesitation, but Nekomiya looked around at everyone, then set foot onto the stairs leading underground.

Kagoi and the others nodded and followed after her.

Too much tension, her tail stood up straight. The tingling atmosphere seemed to be transmitted from her whiskers to her entire body. Cat’s whiskers were said to be sensory organs, it had already been 2 months and a bit since her body became this way. That story, she had many chances to actually feel it with her own body.

The stone wall continued for a little while, but soon, it changed to a natural rugged rock wall. As expected, it was originally a submarine cavern. An opening was connected to the ground above, then a house was built on top, or something like that? On the wall, there were no seaweeds or barnacles attached. In other words, seawater wouldn’t come up this far even at high tide.

Before long, the stairs ended, they arrived at the lower part of the dim submarine cavern.

“D—dark...”

The whispering voice of Karasuma reverberated greatly within the darkness. Nekomiya’s eyes were accustomed to the dark. If she had a few seconds, she would be able to see with a sense no different at all from above ground. However, no light meant that the shadow melted into the darkness, she wouldn’t be able to use shadow magic in this state so it wasn’t too favorable a situation.

Suddenly, she saw a shadow stirring in the corner of her view.

“Inugami...?”

When Nekomiya called out, the shadow slowly raised their face. Reflecting the slight bit of light spilling from the ground above, it shined a golden color. The cat’s eyes clearly grasped the girl’s face. Disheveled silver hair. Unmistakably Inugami.

“Inugami, you’re safe.... We’ve come to save you!”

Looking at Inugami being thrown around still naked, Nekomiya confirmed her body despite knowing it was rude. It didn’t look like there was any trace of assault. At the same time as feeling relieved, Nekomiya thought that being seen naked might as well be similar.

No, let’s just be happy that she’s safe right now. Nekomiya rushed over to Inugami, trailing behind her were Saruwatari and the others.

“Inugami is there? I can’t see well.”

“You don’t need to see in this case.... Inugami, you okay? Can you understand me?”

Although she did ask ‘*can you understand?*’, Nekomiya didn’t expect any answer. Inugami’s mouth was plugged by a gag-like something. In the middle of the bitten object was a large ring, from within her mouth, saliva kept dripping out. The floor being sticking was probably because of that. First, Nekomiya removed that tragic looking thing.

“Neko, miya...”

“They did something so cruel.... Why something...”

Suddenly, she noticed that there was a bucket in the vicinity of Inugami’s face, but Nekomiya didn’t pay much heed to it.

“Saruwatari, Karasuma, please take care of the chains attached to Inugami’s hands and feet.”

“Ch—chain...!?”

She heard Saruwatari who was flustered by the vivid description.

“Please wait Nekomiya, our vision doesn’t work satisfactorily in this situation. What’s going to happen if we carelessly touch some strange place!”

“I, as a girl, will just beat you up though.”

“I don’t want to take such a risky bet! Even if that’s youth...!”

Karasuma certainly didn’t voice any words, but it seemed that he had mostly the same sentiment as Saruwatari. However, now that she couldn’t use shadow magic, Nekomiya cannot cut the chain, so...

Just as she was thinking, Nekomiya acute sense of hearing captured footsteps.

Her ears stood up straight, she looked up.

“(Damn it...!)”

The landlord was coming down. Did he noticed this tumult or did he not? Perhaps the later. However, the sound of footsteps stopped once, then it became a little faster, thinking about that, it was very likely that he had already noticed them anyway.

Inugami’s ears seemed to have sensed that as well. Looking at the appearance of the two who got silent, the man immediately took back their tension. They gathered in front of Nekomiya and Inugami, then turned their gaze toward the stairs.

“Hou.”

The man who came down, had a pair of blood red eyes that shined clearly even in this darkness.

“I thought that there’s no chance this would happen, but preys have come. It’s quite worthwhile to keep the dog alive.”

“I thought that there’s no chance this would happen, but preys have come. It’s quite worthwhile to keep the dog alive.”

“A very courteous manner of talking you have there.” [Notes]

Nekomiya purposely didn’t break her usual pace and replied.

In this darkness, she couldn’t use shadow as the means of communication to request reinforcement from Kyousuke and the others who were outside. However, there were any number of methods other than that. Pushing through Saruwatari and Karasuma, Nekomiya came out in front, she used her tail to lightly hit the two boys’ legs. The two didn’t notice Nekomiya’s aim instantly. A puzzled aura was transmitted from them.

“Did you learn that manner of talking when managing the company? Toki.”

When she purposely got talkative, the man suddenly stopped moving.

As expected, this man was Toki. And if she looked at those red eyes, she would notice that he was a vampire. The conjectures they made until now seemed mostly correct.

“I already know the gist about you. I guess you intended to hide it skillfully, but the message Inugami left behind was found instantly. It has been conveyed to the chieftain as well. The missing case that has been repeating recently is your work as well?”

While fluently talking, she urged Saruwatari and the others by hitting them with her tail. *Notice, notice already!*

“However, setting aside this room, the making of the part above ground isn’t too well made. The ventilation is bad.”

“You’re a smooth talker huh.”

Toki, with an amazed voice, muttered.

“I’m aiming to be a stage actress you see. Ad lib is my specialty. It’s unfortunate that the only one to hear it is you though.”

Several beats after that, she felt a sensation like wind blowing softly. *They noticed! It’s transmitted!* Nekomiya tightly clenched her fist, no, paw?

Supposing one could visualize magic power, they would be able to see waves of magic power that the spirit of wind made, heading outside the stairs. It manipulated the vibration in the air, carrying the conversation here up the stairs. Sometime ago, Saruwatari and Karasuma granted directionality to their voice to call Nekomiya, that was the same method as this.

“I didn’t think that you would even make a room in the basement.”

“Well, there are some necessities. I have many things I can’t let the other islanders see, you see.”

“Considering all that, you made the entrant at a very easy to understand place huh. Like the corner of the living room.”

The vampire Toki, for a little while, was going along with Nekomiya’s story. Was it because he looked down on them, or conversely being vigilant against ambushes?

“Let’s finish the chitchat soon.”

However, after exchange several more conversations, Toki abruptly said so.

“Really, what are you going to do about us?”

“Seal your movement, have you sleep for a while. I’ll be have you become presents to the King together with the Queen’s person.”

“Queen you say...?”

Taken aback, Nekomiya muttered.

“No way, you guys, Akai...”

“Yes, we plan to take her back from you guys. No matter how I look, you guys seem to be mediocre species, but it would still make for an extra present.”

It was something they all but expected, but it really did hit the mark. The vampire slowly approached while putting black lightning on both hands. Kagoi who had confidence as the most durable one among them, came straight out in front and shielded Nekomiya.

Toki’s vigilance seemed to be gradually fading. He probably thought that they had no means to request reinforcement from outside.

“Wa—wait. Please wait...”

Nekomiya, giving out a scared voice, entreated.

“If, if you’re going to take Akai, then there’s no need to insist on us, right? As you said, we’re not such rare species. Even if you overlook...”

“That won’t do. There’s also the possibility you may pull a hit upon reaching Phase 2, you see.”

Toki grinned, in this place, probably only Nekomiya could clearly see that grinning face of his.

“Nekomiya, Run...”

Kagoi said with a voice full of tension.

“This place, I will do some...!”

“Ahh—, Kagoi! Don’t...”

Saying so, Kagoi charged at Toki, Nekomiya tried to restrain him, but she was too late. He grappled with Toki directly from the front, however, his arm was disappointedly twisted. He raised a little anguished voice. Then, the black lightning cladding on Toki’s arms radiated toward Kagoi.

“Gah, gaaa!!”

“Kagoi!”

Even Kagoi’s robust stone skin seemed insufficient to protect himself from pain. Nekomiya tightly ground her teeth.

“A gargoyle with quite a camaraderie, however...”

Unhesitatingly trampling on Kagoi’s back, Toki said.

“You, have wasted his feelings. If you just left the dog there and ran up the stairs, one of you might have been able to escape, and yet...”

That muttered voice was perfectly oozing with conceit. He was perfectly under the impression that this side already had no way to do anything. There, Nekomiya suddenly smiled for the first time. *To completely deceived a veteran vampire in the eleventh hour, my dream to become an actress may not be so far away, is it?*

“.....?”

Toki stared at Nekomiya with quizzical gaze.

“What’s wrong...?”

“Nothing’s wrong. Only, they were in time.”

Immediately following, the ceiling was smashed down, one shadow flew out along with the sunlight.

“”Stream kiiickkkk!!””

Together with the roaring sound of the cave-in, Kyousuke and Rin’s voice was perfectly in chorus. The kick with their whole body bursted into the nape of the black armor wearing Pawn.

When they started hearing Nekomiya’s conversation from the direction of the residence, Kyousuke instantly sensed that it was a reinforcement signal. The conversation with an unfamiliar man clearly reached them as if passing through a speaker or something. He vaguely understood it as manipulating the air vibration by using the power of wind spirit.

Which meant shadow magic had become unusable due to some circumstances. From the fact that even the location had been properly reported in that conversation, he was convinced. Cladding Rin, Kyousuke started running, he

broke through the wall and intrude inside, too impatient to find the stairs, he punched through the bedrock from the living room toward the basement.

And now, in the Stream Cross state, he was confronting a Pawn who appeared to be Toki.

“I’ve made you wait.”

The one who said that wasn’t Kyousuke, it was Rin who tried to forcibly give out a low and austere voice.

“Can you stand, Kagoi?”

“Ahh, I’m saved...”

Raising up Kagoi who had been trampled on the floor, Kyousuke asked. Kagoi seemed to be in pain a little, but he somehow nodded.

Other than Kagoi, there were Nekomiya, Saruwatari, Karasuma, and then Inugami. Everyone was here. Inugami was stark naked, wearing only her birthday suit, to make matter worse, her hands and legs were connected to chains, but still, safe is safe. How harsh a time she had been through, he didn’t know, but the recompense for that would start from now.

“Guu, no, no way, the skeleton, and the slime...”

Toki who had eaten a kick in the face and was blown away, stood up along with an anguished voice. [Rants]

While glaring at him, Kyousuke slowly took a Jeet Kune Do stance.

“It’s not skeleton. It’s Utsurogi Kyousuke-kun.”

Rin said in a clear voice.

“It’s not slime. It’s Himemizu Rin.”

Kyousuke also went along with it.

“Utsurogi...!”

Inugami whose look was a little haggard, shouted in a hoarse voice.

“There are 6 vampires including that guy...! Were there not the remaining 5...!?”

“We didn’t see them.”

Nekomiya answered instead of Kyousuke.

At the same time, Kyousuke recalled Nekomiya and Toki's conversation that he had heard sometime ago. These guys were talking about recapturing Akai's person. Then, there was the possibility that the remaining 5 who weren't here had already headed for the heavy cruiser branch school, which meant....

"Understood."

Kyousuke clearly nodded.

"Let's settle this quickly and go to aid the branch school."

The instant he said so, he felt it in his rib, the heart that wasn't suppose exist throbbed.

That was the signal to end the standby. The heart that wasn't supposed to exist. The heart of nihility. The heart of emptiness. There, the back-up soul smoothly came in. The sensation that the throbbing was gradually getting faster, stronger, was by no means a delusion. Soon, a gust of wind started blowing out of nowhere, it wrapped up Kyousuke and Rin.

"Let's go, Rin!"

"Yup! Let's do it, Kyousuke-kun!"

The empty vessel was being filled to the brim. Soon, power started to endlessly overflow from the filled vessel.

""UOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOo-!!""

Before long, the overflowing power became a shout leaking out from his throat. An unrivaled flesh was being composed. The two people's mind and body became one at the smallest unit. At that point, Toki, who finally sensed what was about to happen in front of his eyes, put black lightning in his right hand and attacked.

"Haah!"

Brushing away the wind cladding his body with his right hand, Kyousuke counter attacked Toki's fist with one hand.

"Guoo...!?"

Toki screamed and was blown off again. His body vigorously slammed against the wall.

“That is...!”

“Yes, this...!”

The voice of Nekomiya who witnessed it for the first time was full of surprise. Kyousuke powerfully responded.

“This, is Extreme Cross!!”

Chapter 58 — Footsteps of the King

Even so, the difference in power between him and the enemies was overwhelming.

Although ‘*Pawn*’ was the lowest class, thanks to the black armor, they could obtain combat ability much more superior than the monsters around.

Moreover, there were 5 of those.

No matter how much a hit species, a hit ability he drew, it was impossible to overturn this difference in war potential. Without much struggle, they would be able to trample, step on him, and in fact, it really went that way.

“That’s why I warned you. What a useless waste of life.”

The heavy cruiser was floating offshore Delf Island. One of the Pawn who attacked there in order to recapture the Queen’s person, glared at the man falling flat in front of him who looked like a tattered dust cloth and muttered so. This man who reincarnated as a pharaoh — a superior species of mummy — had been trying to obstruct their path by using preeminent telekinesis power. In fact, his power was quite significant. To break that invisible wall, it was almost impossible even with the physical strength of the 5 of them. If this was one-on-one, he would be pressed to a hopeless battle.

But in the end, this pharaoh only had in hand abilities of about the same as one Pawn at best. While he poured his power to maintain the wall, his body was mostly defenseless. It might have been a different story if he had evacuated himself on the other side of the wall, but by purposely exposing his body outside the wall, this pharaoh had assumed a position that induced the Pawns’ attacks.

Did he mean to buy time?

Or was he confident he could challenge 5 people by himself?

But whichever he was thinking, it didn’t come true.

Even when talked to by the Pawn, the pharaoh didn’t response. He was still collapsed, lying face down. The ornaments decorating his body had popped off,

the bandages torn, blackened skin exposed. Only the golden mask was stupidly sturdy or something, it didn't had a single crack.

"This guy, did he die?"

One of the Pawn, Asaake muttered.

"Who knows. But it's certain he can't move anymore. Let's go inside the ship and look for the Queen."

Recapturing her person was definitely their most prioritized objective.

The Pawns started walking toward the cabin, at that time, a terrific impact attacked them from behind.

"Guoo...!?"

"Hiii!?"

When they looked back, the pharaoh was slowly rising up, exactly as if being strung by some kind of invisible thread. His expression wasn't discernible due to the golden mask. However, the pharaoh raised the broken ankh in his right hand, and started attacking the Pawns with mysterious power.

"Th—this guy, is still alive...!"

Asaake's scream jarringly echoed in the ears.

"Then we should just kill him!"

At the shout of one person, the other Pawns also nodded. They converged blood energy, spinning it into a spear form.

The black armor, aka the Promotional Armor, was an armor that granted quasi-power of the other chess pieces to the Pawns who originally had no combat ability.

Physical ability of Knights, blood energy of the Bishops. And then overwhelming defense capability of Rooks.

What was especially user-friendly was this blood energy.

".....!"

The pharaoh already couldn't even utter any words and just raised the broken ankh.

“Dieee!!”

One Pawn projected a spear. Faster than the pharaoh could fire telekinesis, that spear stretched straight ahead, piercing deeply into his chest.

“.....!!”

Unable to stop the momentum of that spear, the pharaoh’s body was affixed on the wall of the cabin.

Continuing after that, other Pawns also fired blood energy spears one after another. All the spears hit the pharaoh. From his parched body, blood, didn’t even flow. His head wearing the heavy mask drooped down. His hand lost its strength, the broken ankh made a sound and rolled on the floor of the deck.

“Did, did we do it...?”

“This guy really gave us much trouble...!”

“Unnecessary waste of time...!”

The Pawns unanimously cursed, but still, they cautiously took distance from the pharaoh.

They beat him up, they killed him, he died, just as the moment they were convinced so, he got up and made a surprise attack on them, this wasn’t a one time occurrence. Not a single one in this place could be confident that he was really put to rest with this. However, they confirmed that the pharaoh had finally stopped moving entirely, everyone started inside the ship.

Rather than a strong enemy, he was an ominous enemy. They defeated him again and again, but he resurrected and got up. Undead monsters original had a tough image, even so, this pharaoh seemed to be outstanding among those.

After all the Pawns had entered inside the ship, there was no one left to notice that the pharaoh’s fingertip twitched again.

When they entered the ship, doors that seemed to lead to sailors room lined up on both side. The Pawns cautiously opened every single one of those.

“Strange...”

One of them murmured, the others also nodded.

“True, I can’t find any other monsters.”

Thinking calmly, it was hard to imagine that the only ones to strengthen the defense of this heavy cruiser were that pharaoh and incubus. Imps and such could be said as wild monsters being tamed by the incubus.

They had heard from Tokihara that a trade fair was going to be held in Albadanba soon, and the students of this heavy cruiser was going to participate in that event. A great majority of the students seemed to have been assigned over there, and the defense of the heavy cruiser would be lacking, it was with that prediction that they had attacked at this timing. Thinking about that, the fact that the number was few itself was nothing strange. But as expected, this was too few.

Did they sense the attack and escape, or are they holding their breath, looking for a gap? Whichever it is, we can't be careless.

Cautiously advancing in the narrow passage, they opened the doors one by one. At such a time, one of the vampires suddenly raised his voice.

“Oya...?”

“Asaake-san, did you find something?”

“Ahh, no.... It looks like the captain room. A stupidly wide room.”

When they looked into the room Asaake had been peering in, it certainly took more space than the other sailor rooms.

The Queen seemed not to be here, but instead, they caught sight of a large amount of documents. On top of the deck was a map of this world which was more accurate than they thought, something was added to it in Japanese.

“This is...”

One Pawn picked it up and said.

“Their future planned route?”

“It seems they're going to Werneus peninsula after leaving Albadanba.”

Peering in from the side, his comrade also muttered.

Werneus was a peninsula greatly protruded out southeast of the continent. It was far out of the dominated territory of the Empire, so a monster corps like those guys would be able to act relatively easily. Tracing drawn the arrow, it headed straight north from the peninsula, taking a route toward the woodland

in the eastern part of the continent.

“The east? What are those guys aiming for?”

“Don’t know. Aren’t they just randomly running around to escape from us...?”

What Tokihara, *‘the Pawn of Albadanba’* had been instructed by Bishop Akeno, was to determine the future planned route of those guys. For a simple reason: as long as they know about those guys’ movement, it would be easier for the blood clan to act.

As long as they could seize the Queen’s person, this would be come a trivial matter, but there was no loss in remembering this information.

“There’s still a lot of documents I’m worrying about, but first is the Queen...”

Other Pawns nodded to those words. They left the room and started investigating the sailor room again.

Yes, it was the Queen.

The Queen of the blood clan, Akai Asuka. Her treachery would reach the King’s ears soon. However, the domination authority of the King had no effect on the Queen who was in a place far away from that castle.

The King who held the original of the blood clan factor, had overwhelming authority over all members of the blood clan who held copies of that factor. It was a chained curse one could try to strongly maintain their will to their best, but never could they escape. So to speak, the entirety of the blood clan was something like the offshoots of the King. The Queen was no exception. If she stood in front of the King, and if the King willed it, her free will would be snatched away, her body moved as the King’s desire.

Naturally, even this domination authority wasn’t perfect.

To dominate the opponent, the King needed to know their exact location. Speaking concretely, he had to clearly perceive their existence. Therefore, in a place far way like this, even the King couldn’t manipulate the treacherous Queen.

Basically, the King had been mandating the blood clan to present their blood to him. The King never forgot the taste and smell of blood he had drunk once. Wherever they were, the King would be able to accurately grasp the target location. The act of dedicating blood had the meaning of having one’s existence

perceived by the King wherever they were in the world, and for the blood clan, it also had the meaning of putting on a collar they could never remove.

The only one who didn't dedicate her blood to the King was the Queen. She was favored by the King. For that Queen who was so obedient to the King from the beginning, to betray him, even the King himself never thought of it.

For this reason, they were going to secure the Queen's person. If they just dragged her before the King's presence, the rest would settle by themselves. Using the King's domination authority, he could have the Queen spit out information, force her to suicide, made her present her blood and thus putting her under complete control, everything was possible.

Naturally, she would resist as well. Her Blood Crave Illness would break out soon, even so, the Queen was the Queen. It would be difficult for themselves who was only Pawns, to capture her safely. They were equipped with knives charged with a werewolf's saliva, but would that be enough to pin down her power?

In case securing her person was difficult, they would limit it to only collecting her blood. As long as they could deliver her blood to the King, the result would be the same. And in the case they had no choice but to use their trump card. Everyone looked at Asaake. The bottle of blood and the knife he had been entrusted by Tokihara was that trump card.

"We're counting on you, Asaake-san."

"Ha ha ha. Please leave it to me."

The Pawns finally came in front of one room. There was a presence of someone inside.

Perhaps, it was this place? Thinking so, they tried to grab the doorknob, that instant.

Their entire body was attacked by a shuddering sensation. Strong hostility and malice turned into pressure and tightened their head, it was that kind of sensation. Their body stiffened. The chill made them want to escape even immediately. And the origin of that was clearly emitting from the other side of this door.

There was already no room for doubt. One Pawn shook off his stiffness and

kicked open the door.

In there was a girl wearing sailor uniform, while seating on the bed, she was looking over here.

“We finally found you, Queen.”

“...What did you come here for?”

She said, with chilly voice containing a penetrating cold.

Straight long hair extending till her waist. But there was no neat and tidy impression at all, if pushed to say, her image would be aggressive. In the depth of her almond eyes swirled blood colored anger. The Pawns naturally floated a smile on their mouth. Their entire body felt like it was trembling violently.

“...You,”

That Pawn could barely open his mouth.

“We’ve come to deliver you to the King’s place.”

“Stop joking.”

She clearly said.

“I will never go to that man’s place ever again. If there’s ever a next chance to go there...”

The Queen stood up and glared over here.

“It will be the time to cut off that guy head in his sleep.”

Immediately following, black wave gushed forth from the Queen’s body, it easily blew away the Pawns. They, along with their armor, floated up and was immediately thrown against the wall. *Is she really suffering Blood Crave Illness?* That doubt flitted through their mind. It was power overwhelming to that degree.

But, that doubt was immediately shaken off. When they raised their head and looked at the Queen, her face was moist with sweats, rough breathing was being repeated. It was an appearance that the normal Queen would never show. Fatigue had attacked her at once by the use of power.

As they thought, the Queen right now wasn’t in a normal condition.

“Capture the Queen no matter what!”

The Pawns simultaneously took out the knives Tokihara had given them. If they wounded her with this, it would cause the same symptoms as being bitten by a werewolf. The remaining factors would return to ground state as well, the Blood Crave Illness would progress further. If all the vampire factors returned to ground state, it would reach a level where even life activities would be disrupted. Once it reached that point, even the Queen would be more powerless than even a human baby.

While leaving the Queen barely alive in that state, they would bring her to the King.

Naturally, that would be impossible with one shot. But if they hit her once, the Queen would definitely weaken, if they kept going like that and cut her again and again, that time would always arrive. That was their original plan.

However,

“Do not ... look down on me ...!”

Together with a wrathful voice, the Queen put up her right hand. Black wave extending from that arm tie up the Pawn who was plunging in the foremost.

“Gaah...!”

The man’s scream echoed in the narrow cabin. Taking advantage of that gap, a different Pawn tried to slash his knife from the side.

“.....—!”

“Uoo!”

The Queen canceled the restraint of the tied up Pawn, she caught the swiftly swung knife of the other Pawn between her fingers.

The knife had the same structure as the fang of a poisonous snake. The werewolf saliva stored inside was being secreted from the tip. Looking at the slowly drooping transparent liquid, the Queen narrowed her eyes.

“...Although I have heard that Inugami has gone missing.”

“Good guess.”

Inside the narrow room, the Pawns separated to left and right and slowly

approached, one of them answered so to the Queen's words.

"But, it is only a dog after all. Unlike your other classmates."

"...Kaoru and Harao who should have been on the deck?"

"We fail to catch the incubus, but the pharaoh resisted, so we punished him a little. Well, he's probably safe."

"I see."

It was only two short words, but it was loaded with clear anger more than any words the Queen had uttered so far.

The Queen still gripped the knife with fingers of one hand, the other hand took on a spear hand form. **Zuwa**, making that sound, blood red poisonous-looking claws extended from the tips of her white slender fingers. Everyone in this place comprehended the action the Queen was going to take next, but none of them was in time to cope with it.

The spear hand went through a Pawn's chest. It broke the armor, crushed the bones, smashed the heart which was the source of a vampire's life.

"Gah...!"

The man screamed, his eyes rolled back, then he disappeared like ashes in the wind.

The Queen killed him. One Pawn, without any hesitation, in an instant. Her breathing rough, the Queen looked like she would collapse soon, but she didn't even give him time to resist. If she felt like it, even defeating them all here might be possible. The Pawns shed cold sweats, they shuddered. At this point, they couldn't say anything optimistic like capturing her person. Even if they tried to steal her blood and retreat, it would still be uncertain whether or not they could actually escape.

In that case,

We need to change our strategy. The Pawns's awareness naturally directed to Asaake. He had two knives.

One was the same as everyone else, the type with werewolf saliva. And the other was a knife with the same structure but stored inside was blood.

This knife was originally something Bishop Akeno made in jest. Its original

purpose wasn't to pour poison into the opponent's body. It was born in the process of trying to simplify the vampire transformation ceremony. That is to say, what it was meant to store was neither poison nor werewolf saliva but vampire blood. And that had to be fresh.

What stored in the other knife Asaake was holding, was that.

Can we do it? Everyone looked at the Queen.

She was angry. The Akai family was the oldest lineage even among the blood clan, they were proud, always had composure against all things. Always elegant. At any time, they would always show their superiority in their attitude which was never meant to collapse. Her fighting manner had none of those. Despite her body was sticky with sweats, she released power, made an unarmed attack using blood claws that couldn't be said as elegant at all, but those weren't because she was pressured by the Blood Crave Illness. She was angry.

Once. Just once is good enough. If this plan, then we don't need to cut her several times.

“.....!”

While they were hesitating, the Queen moved. After quickly stepped in, she extended her blood claws straight ahead. That Pawn bent his body and narrowly avoided it, but the room was narrow. There was no place to retreat. He was immediately cornered. Other Pawns tried to hold down the Queen with blood energy from behind, but those were immediately bounced back. That Pawn gripped his knife and attacked the Queen. The Queen countered with blood claws. Her claws easily broke his armor and dug into his chest. He twisted his body, narrowly avoided a direct hit to his heart. Blood entered his trachea and regurgitated. It was almost spouted from his throat, however, to avoid that, the Queen twisted his neck with her free hand and threw him against the wall. The white wall of the cabin was stained with blood.

At this moment, the Queen's both arms were occupied. The remaining 3 Pawns drew their knife and simultaneously started running.

The Queen extracted her blood claws that had stabbed into the Pawn's chest, and got ready to intercept the three Pawns. She swung her blood claws,

severing the knife holding arm of the 1st one, caught the knife of the 2nd one with one hand. And lastly, when Asaake jumped in, she used the blood claws of the right hand that was still free to skillfully chop off his hand holding the knife from the wrist.

Blood blown out from the arm's cut section, the Queen hated being bathed in it from right overhead. She kicked down the 1st one, and broke the jawbone of the 3rd one, Asaake.

“Fugaah!”

His chin broken, Asaake made a strange voice. The arm he was brandishing, was gripping another knife.

If this attack hit, we may win.

The blood claws growing from the Queen's fingertips, penetrated Asaake's chest. But just like the attack sometime ago, he barely avoided a direct hit to his heart, escaping from a fatal wound. But immediately following that, a blade ripped through the air and pierced the Queen shoulder.

“...-!?”

The Queen kicked away the 2nd Pawn whom she was pinning down with one arm and Asaake, then she pulled out the knife pierced in her shoulder. But she was too late. The stored ‘*blood*’ had already flowed into the Queen's body through her vein.

She probably noticed that the thing stored inside that knife wasn't werewolf saliva. She threw that away, and after trampled it, she glared at the Pawns.

“You, no way...!!”

“As I thought, you understand?”

The Pawn who had his chest pierced, his neck twisted, laughed, but never did he get careless, while taking distance, he said.

“That is Tokihara-san's blood. It's fresh. The factors are in excited state as well.”

Vampire factors are not almighty at all. It can be suppressed by resisting will. Therefore, the vampire transformation ceremony needs to suppress the other party resistance better. Make them faint, do it while they're asleep, or choose

obedient humans as target. If taking that into consideration, this trick knife is only a product with slightly better ease of use than a syringe.

However, all things have exceptions.

The case vampire factors are injected into a target that has already turned to a vampire. In this case, they are already a vampire, therefore they can't suppress the factors consciously. The factors that are there from the beginning and the newly injected factors clash against each other.

The strength of the factors are determined by the density of vampire blood. The Queen's lineage that had piled up many generations and continued unbroken since the moment the blood clan was founded, was terrifyingly strong, the Pawns that had only went through 1 or 2 generations since they became vampires, were weak. When weak factors flowed into the body of a strong factors holder, the strong factors will destroy the weak factors.

Therefore, in this case, even if they poured blood into the Queen, the changes that they could obtain was — at a glance — nothing at all.

“It's the same as having a transmitter embedded. It's a Pawn's blood after all, so it won't last long inside a Queen's body like you, but it should still remain for 20 to 30 minutes.”

In other words, for 30 minutes, the Queen's existence would be perceived by the King. During that 30 minutes, her existence would be stripped naked. It was only 30 minutes. Once that passed, Tokihara's blood would completely disappeared from the Queen's body. But 30 minutes were plenty enough for them. Enough to collect the Queen's blood, and escape from her attack range.

“S, sto ... p ...”

The Queen held her forehead and bent down. Her expression that could only be seen slightly, was warped in anguish.

Those words were probably not intended for the Pawns. It was only a fleeting scream trying to oppose a different will that was entering her, trying to dominate her body.

“Did it begin...”

Now that they had accomplished this, the Queen was not their *'enemy'*

anymore. In a literal meaning. For 30 minutes after this, Queen Akai Asuka would stop being their '*enemy*'. [Notes]

They won. They couldn't take the best plan for sure, but well, it was a passing mark. However, the bitter thought was stronger than joy of victory.

First of all, they paid a sacrifice. The degree of 1 Pawn was only insignificant damage if looking from the blood clan as a whole. But he was a colleague to them. And most of all, though 2nd best plan, they had taken this plan that they never wanted to take, that fact was also bitter.

"A, u..."

The Queen held her head and was raising an anguished voice.

"N, no.... Don't ... enter ...!"

Anguish soon gave way to scream. But it was already too late.

"You'll be inviting the '*King*' to your own home."

Gazing at the Queen, who had thrown herself on the bed and soon could only moan weakly, a Pawn muttered to no one.

When Goubayashi and Sakuma arrived at the heavy cruiser branch school, the deck was still to the point of ominous.

They could see traces of a violent battle, but not a single soul was there. There should have been several students staying in this branch school. On the deck were Harao and Kaoru, as well as the imps and sahagins unit Kaoru was leading. Gofunkawahara, the goblin unit and several other students were also added as Akai's guards.

Their appearance was no where to be found, which meant, something had happened.

That the goblins, imps and sahagin couldn't be found, was probably because Gofunkawahara and Kaoru who were their leader, weren't around. In case they had no leader, they often hide themselves and stay still, or go around looking for their leader.

"It's just like a ghost ship..."

Sakuma muttered. Goubayashi silently nodded.

No one was here. Exactly like a ghost ship. It was because they knew this deck where students were always lined up or bustling about, that this feeling was even more excessive. For every step they took, they assumed the worst case, their anxiety worsened. No one was here, that was too strange. But when the two people approached the cabin, they saw their classmate crucified on the wall and swallowed their breath.

“Ha, Harao-kun...!?”

The one who was exposed in this tragic state, was unmistakably their classmate, Harao Masaki.

In Harao’s body stuck 5 spear-like things. For a moment, they hesitated whether it was okay to pull those out, but he would never bleed to death with that body. They pulled out the spears, laid his body down on the heavy cruiser branch school. Harao didn’t even twitch.

What the heck had happened? It was certain that there was a battle. As a result, Harao lost and was crucified in this way. Not just Harao, Okama Kaoru should have been here as well, but that guy was nowhere to be seen.

“Goubayashi-kun, Harao-kun is...”

Sakuma asked in a trembling voice, but Goubayashi shook his head.

“We can’t infer if he’s dead or alive with pulse or breathing. So I don’t know if he’s among the living or the death either.”

His words were calm, but strong anger was oozing from his voice.

Sakuma grasped the limp and unmoving hands of Harao, and made them crossed in front of his chest. Now, she could only believe in his words: *‘Harao doesn’t die, he only sleep.’*

“Kaoru-chan ... where is he?”

“I don’t know. But, Kaoruko isn’t here, Harao was defeated, which means...”

“Asuka-chan is also...”

Sakuma gulped. They were too slow. It might have already changed to the worst case scenario.

No, it was still too early to despair. Somehow reshaping her heart that had

almost withered in one go, she fumbled around for the next constructive idea. First, they should finish confirming the situation. They had to confirm Akai's safety as well. And if she was safe, it was highly possible that she knew something about this case.

"Sakuma, you look after Harao here. I'll go inside the ship."

Apparently, Goubayashi also reached the same conclusion. Sakuma hesitated to nod for an instant, but still, she nodded immediately. Considering the risk of enemies being inside, if Sakuma followed along, she might just only become a hindrance instead.

However, just as Goubayashi started to stand up, **clank**, the door heading inside the ship opened.

Sakuma drew back, Goubayashi took a stance.

Within the tense atmosphere, the person appeared from the other side of the door was an unexpected person.

"...Akai?"

Goubayashi opened his mouth.

Yes, they saw the person whose safety they had been worrying about the most, Akai Asuka herself. She was safe, which meant it was very likely that she was able to repel the attackers somehow. But in that case, it was still strange that they couldn't find Kaoru anywhere.

"Akai, please explain the situation."

Goubayashi walked up to her and asked that.

"Harao is defeated, Kaoruko can't be found, but you're safe. What on earth is going on?"

"....."

Akai didn't answer. She simply smiled.

"Akai...?"

Strange, the one who thought that wasn't just Sakuma but Goubayashi as well. Akai's faint smile felt different somewhere from the kinds she had shown up until now. The silence gradually expanded the uncomfortable feeling. The

uncomfortable feeling soon changed into fear creeping all over her body.

“(Wrong...)”

Fear turned into conviction.

“Separate!”

Sakuma gave out the she instantly thought of.

“That girl is Asuka-chan, but not Asuka-chan!”

Immediately after that, a fast roundhouse kick blew away Goubayashi’s giant body.

Chapter 59 — Preparation

In the Maritime United Nations Albadanba, the trade fair with the continent which was opened twice a years, was treated as a big event. This year, the maritime caravan had an unfortunate accident so the number of merchandise was little, however, the goods brought by 2nd year class 4 who came together with the caravan, were going to work as its substitutes.

The trade fair was going to be held at a large beach in the northwestern part of Delf Island. Currently, the merchants of the caravan and the students were bringing in merchandise. During that time, the chieftains would have a meeting on Delf Island. Ryuzaki and Welkano-shi were also going to attend and decide the detailed program of the trade fair.

The trade fair was going to take place in front of many islanders, but actually, a certain amount of goods transaction was going to be done in this place before that. So to speak, the fair also served as a ceremony for each chieftain to show their dignity and bring back various rare articles from oversea, if some kind of difficulty was to happen at the purchasing step, they would expose a shameful sight, so well, that was the main reason (for this early transaction).

“Satomi, for now, please pull my tail again if someone tells a lie. I’m counting on you.”

“.....”

Satomi Yamako the Satori made a slight nod.

Satomi was basically a reticent girl. It’s not that she wasn’t self-asserting, her emotion expression variety was relatively rich, but it was rather difficult to notice those unless you look carefully. Because this was Ryuzaki who had been stalking, er, properly observing all of his classmates that he was able to easily come to a mutual understanding with her in this way.

“You’ve been making quite a serious look.”

Just before they entered chieftain Bergel’s house, those words came calling from behind.

When they turned around, there stood the leader of the maritime caravan,

Welkano.

“Welkano-san.”

“.....”

Ryuzaki muttered his name, in contrast, Satomi escaped behind Ryuzaki. He was an old man with small physique and twig-like limbs, but there was a hale and hearty impression to him. His skin was also tanned and healthy. Not that he was distrusting them, but he always drew a definite line and tried to choose safety, in front of this man named Welkano, even Ryuzaki felt him very difficult to deal with.

“Even during the discussion this morning, it has been bothering be a little, but is that one over there a Satori-oni?”

Glance, Welkano shifted his gaze toward Satomi and said.

“Satori-oni...?”

“Oya, was I wrong? Was it about 200 years ago? There was an army of carnage that crossed over the eastern sea to invade this continent, at that time, a monster called Satori-oni was mixed within, or so I’ve heard.”

Was that the case? Ryuzaki recalled the monster memo left behind by Selena.

Within the monsters that the students of 2nd year class 4 had reincarnated as, there were several rare species that was rarely seen, and monsters whose name and figure only appeared in legend. Among those, the species that corresponded to Japanese youkai like Satomi’s and Karasuma’s, were hardly ever discovered.

Were the monsters that they had reincarnated as truly based on the ones living in this world, or was they based on the legend of the former world? No matter which way it was, he still couldn’t explain it adequately, so he had been wondering about it a little.

“I heard they can read human heart. So they are suitable to probing other intentions. Combine that with Ryuzaki-dono’s bargaining, and it’ll be terrifying.”
“I’m really not that good with politics or bargaining.”

At this time, he had easily spoke his feelings, perhaps it was because his fatigue was accumulating more than expected.

“However, I think a person who is leading more than 40 monsters, can’t be said to be poor at it.”

“I suppose so. It’s a difficult position.”

This elderly person, what on earth is his intention to be talking about this kind of thing?

Ryuzaki was unable to discern the other party’s real intention, and was a little on guard.

According to Ryuzaki’s observation during these two weeks, Welkano was a virtuous human. At the same time, his conduct principle was loyal to his instinct as a merchant. He deemed sincerity correct, but never would he trust the other party from the bottom of his heart. He was superior as a business partner, but Ryuzaki couldn’t show their weakness, accordingly, it felt difficult to breathe when meeting him.

“Chieftain Bergel is doubting you.”

Welkano lowered the volume of his voice and said that kind of thing.

“...Why did you teach me that?”

“I want to give you guys a loan. With my standpoint, I can protect you from the chieftain.”

Satomi had been tightly grabbing Ryuzaki’s tail, however, she didn’t pull it.

“The caravan also has people who doubt that you guys belong to that Red Moon gang, but I don’t think so. In exchange for yielding part of the profits in the trade fair this time, we will carry the selected materials to Werneus Kingdom, that’s a promise.”

“Yes.”

“If you could increase the percentage of that profits a little more.”

As before, Satomi didn’t pull his tail. Which meant Welkano wasn’t trying to trick them.

To have no need to worry about lies here, was very comfortable for a psychological warfare. It wasn’t so stressful.

Then, the rest was simply a matter of risk.

The heavy cruiser branch school was going to head to Werneus Kingdom after

leaving this Albadanba. It was a peninsula protruded from the southeastern part of the continent, at the tip of the crescent shape; to its north was the Beast King mountain range and forest, as well the adventurer self-governing territory, therefore, it was one of the countries where the influence of the Empire was hardest to reach.

They were thinking to stop there for a while, receive the delivery of materials from Welkano company, then build anew the caterpillar unit and aim for the north. But perhaps, money would be necessary to carry it out.

This trade fair also served to raise fund. They would have the maritime caravan purchase the goods they obtained at the fair. Some of those was to be cash-back as procurement fee of material. Welkano was saying to increase that cash-back.

But this proposal was the best he could ask for. For Ryuzaki, the story would never progress further without first clarifying the relationship of the vampires lurking on this island and the man named Toki who had a connection with chieftain Bergel. Now, a battle might have broken out somewhere on this island. As a result, they might defeat that Toki. If they defeat Toki without solving the misunderstanding, a deterioration of relationship would be inevitable. Now that Kyousuke group was doing their best, what Ryuzaki could do was to work hard so that the result of their battle would not be taken in a bad direction.

“(In the end, it’s still politics...)”

While scratching his forehead, Ryuzaki closed his eyes.

“Understood. Welkano-san.”

“It’s really helpful that the story went fast.”

Thereupon, for the first time, Welkano showed his teeth, and grinned. There were many teeth missing but what remain was beautifully white.

“In fact, we already know Inugami’s whereabouts. We have sent a rescue unit, but worst case, a battle may have occurred already.”

“That’s not too gentle a story.”

“So there’s something about that, Welkano-san. Do you happen to know about a person named Toki? He seems to be a person very intimate with the

chieftain.”

At Ryuzaki’s question, this time, it was the elderly man’s turn to narrow his eyes.

“I have never met him directly, but if the name is Tokihara, then I’ve heard of it. He has been living on this island since about 10 years ago, and seems to be a friend of chieftain Bergel.”

“”UOOOORYAAAAAAA...!!””

Perfectly synchronized his breathing with Rin, Kyouzuke’s fist directly pounded the vampire.

“GUOOo...!”

His face beaten, Toki was greatly bounced away. He crashed into the wall, then powerlessly rolled on the floor.

Extreme Cross. It was the form of Kyouzuke and Rin perfectly becoming ‘one’ by Phase 3 ability of Utsurogi Kyouzuke who had reincarnated as a skeleton. The appearance was neither man nor woman, a human with light blue hair. This was also the image that represented their determination that was said once before: every parts that Kyouzuke was lacking, Rin would make up for it. Kyouzuke’s expression was stiff. While everyone was holding their breath and watching the situation, he once again glared at the vampire Toki.

This form had even instant killed Knight Suou. There was no way it couldn’t bury a mere one vampire in front of him.

What made Kyouzuke hesitated was Toki’s strange state.

“Fu, fu fu.... Ha ha ha...”

He was laughing. But that was not a powerless laugh coming from despair, neither was it laughter of one who lost his sanity. It was full of confidence, a smile of a winner filling with some kind of conviction. Everyone in this place was watching Toki with a puzzled expression, or possibly an uncomfortable expression.

“...What are you laughing about?”

“Think I’ll tell you? Fu fu, but I guess it’s fine. I’m going to be killed anyway.”

Toki's tone expressed his extremely good mood. The countenance of the middle aged man without any special characteristic, now warped in joy.

"Now, I'm definitely convinced. This battle appears to be our victory."

Was it a bluff, or was he saying that seriously? There was not enough basis to judge it at this stage. Kyousuke tightly clenched his fist, and again glared at Toki.

"...What's the matter? You're not attacking?"

Kyousuke couldn't grasp the real intention of the smiling Toki.

However,

He turned his clenched fist toward the opponent, and slowly took the Jeet Kune Do stance.

No matter how he was unable to surmise the opponent intention, anymore than this was as the opponent said. Even if he kept waiting forever, he would never be able to get the truth from Toki. He didn't now what was happening on this island, or what had made Toki convince of his victory, but for Kyousuke, the choice of leaving Toki here and possibly let him escape, didn't exist.

It was almost certain that Toki had some kind of connection with chieftain Bergel. According to Ryuzaki, the chieftain shouldn't know about the existence of the vampires, so perhaps, Toki had one-sidedly tricked the chieftain and won him over. If he let that kind of man escape, it was no guarantee that he wouldn't escape to the meeting place and strangely stir it up. Neither was there any guarantee that he wouldn't assist the 5 vampires that was supposedly attacking the branch school.

Now, here, there was no way but to kill him.

"Kyousuke-kun!"

Rin shouted.

"Right, let's do it!"

Toki was calmly smiling, but he spread red wings from behind the tattered black armor, then he turned his gaze toward Nekomiya direction. *'I'm going to be killed'*, despite saying that, he was stubbornly looking for away to prolong his life.

Just before Kyouzuke started to run off, Toki moved. At a speed that made one doubted just where in his body this kind of strength remained, he was closing in on Nekomiya group. Karasuma and Saruwatari, each readied their weapon and came out in front. But, the vampire's strength disregarded the two people's resistance and knocked them down, then he reached his hand toward Inugami who was still connected to the chains.

He wants to make a shield, Kyouzuke instantly understood.

But, Kyouzuke didn't stop his feet. He clenched his fist, held it aloft, and kept quickly approaching Toki. Seeing Nekomiya stood in front, trying to protect Inugami, Kyouzuke shouted.

"Nekomiya! Leave it to us!"

"—...!"

For an instant, Nekomiya grimaced for being told to turn her back to her comrade and avoid the attack, but she instantly nodded and jumped aside. Toki's hand grabbed Inugami's neck. Immediately, he held her in his arms, making her body a shield. The weakened Inugami couldn't even offer any decent resistance and was handled as he pleased.

""Extreme Blooowww———!!""

Kyouzuke, without stopping, resolutely struck with the fist he had been holding aloft. His fist, at the moment it was about to pierce the chest of Inugami who was made a shield, burst open like water and disappeared. Thereupon, Kyouzuke's body stopped moving, both Toki and Inugami didn't quiver either.

A deadly silence perfectly wrapped the basement, immediately following that:

"Guhaa!"

The vampire man spat out blood and let go of Inugami. The liquefied arm tore a hole in Toki body and flew out. Immediately after that, it returned to Kyouzuke's body and reconstructed in the form of an arm.

The girl who lost her support and was collapsing, he caught her with his left arm.

«Fu shuu...!»

Rin took a breath. In front of Kyousuke's eyes, the man who coughed up blood, still in the posture of facing up, was thrown out on the cold stone floor. His armor was completely broken, in his chest was a gaping hole. His heart was bitten into from inside. As expected, he wasn't living.

It was said that vampire doesn't leave corpse behind. His body rustlingly crumbled like sand, and became a mountain of ashes piled up in the underground cavern. The traces that he was there was only those ashes and a large amount of blood flowed out on the floor.

“(Blood still remains even in death...?)”

Kyousuke thought so as he watched the blood remained on the floor.

«Ah—, n—, ahem.»

Rin unnaturally cleared her throat.

«Kyousuke-kun, till when are you going to touch Hibiki-chan's body?»

“N, u? Uh oh! Sorry!”

As he was supporting Inugami, he almost unintentionally dropped her, but he instantly laid her down on the floor again. The chains on her hands and feet had been cut at some point in time. Probably, Karasuma and Saruwatari did it while Kyousuke was fighting with Toki.

He didn't forget that Inugami was naked. He didn't forget, but....

“Nevertheless, Utsurogi, just now, you were staring directly...”

In a place slightly apart, Nekomiya was crossing her arms.

“That, is not good.”

“That can't be helped! I can't fight if I don't look in front!”

As much as possible, he was trying to expel it out of his mind, but Inugami's body line was clearly recalled in his brain.

“I, Inugami, sorry...”

“Ahh, it's fine.... Rather than that, do you have my clothes?”

“I'll ask Hanazono bring them. Saruwatari, you guys go call her please.”

Instructed by Nekomiya, the boys of the rescue team reluctantly flew away.

Once again, Kyousuke looked around the area. This place appeared to be a

natural underground cavern. In addition to furnitures such as shelf and desk, he saw places where lamps were placed, even here, Toki seemed to have done various work. When he shifted his gaze a little, in the back of the cavern were small skulls piled up like a mountain.

«...That is, children bones, is it?»

Rin muttered.

“Probably.”

Still sitting on the ground, Inugami nodded.

“Once a month, this man sucked blood and those are his victims. Disgusting.”
“It seems various things are going to come out if we look around here, but I’ll leave the investigation to Nekomiya group.”

Kyousuke said so and directed his gaze aboveground.

“We’ll head to the branch school. «*Our victory*», those words Toki said before he died are also worrying.”

“Right, please be careful.”

“It’s okay it’s okay.”

Nekomiya’s face turned meek, she nodded. Rin stretched out her arm from Kyousuke and flutteringly waved it. Unlike when she was in slime form, a realistic arm was growing on top of the clothes so appearance-wise, it was gross.

“If you’re heading to the branch school, I’ll also accompany.”

«Ginyaaa!»

Hearing the voice of Akira who had been there since who knows when, Rin screamed. Looking over, a fireball burning coolly as usual was floating over there. Since a boy came down first, Inugami openly grimaced, she covered the area around her chest and backed off. It seemed an average, ordinary shyness came back when the state of emergency ended.

«Hibiki-chan, you don’t need to worry. Hino-kun is probably not interested in a woman’s body, you see.»

“Don’t say misleading things please. In fact, it’s not so much though.”

When he talked like this, Kyouusuke started worrying whether Akira was more empty and lack of greed than himself.

“I, I understand for now. It’ll be helpful if you could come along though.”

“Well, what I can do doesn’t amount to much now, does it?”

“That’s not true.”

Kyouusuke laughed a little, but he instantly tightened his expression and jumped high above. When he left through the hole opened in the ceiling, it was just at the time Hanazono was about to carry Inugami’s clothes down the stairs, the boys group who was trying to follow her, was bound by Shokuzura’s tentacles and was grumbling their grudge.

The next aim was the branch school.
The vampires heading over there probably counted 5. With the war potential left at the branch school now, they wouldn’t be able to compete with those.

Kyouusuke had to hurry.

Chapter 60 — Dyeing the Blue Sea Crimson (I)

Presently, the majority of students were carrying luggage to the venue of the trade fair.

There were several reason why most students were assigned to this place. First of all, they needed proper camouflage in order to hide the trouble with the vampires that was happening on this Delf Island from the islanders. Secondly, it was simply because they who had low combat ability might die in vain when the heavy cruiser branch school was to be attacked.

The combat ability of the vampires was high. Even against a single Pawn, the students who could resist them were few. Only, concerning this decision, dissatisfaction welled up from some combat personnel, starting from Kensaki Megumi. In fact, this seemed like announcing that they were not counted as war potential. So speaking if it was natural, then it was natural.

“Kensaki-san, you haven’t cheered up yet?”

In the trade fair venue, the arms crossing, headless public morals committee member was fully pouting the lips of the head that was put on a wooden box.

“Of course. Even I also want to join the branch school’s defense. Why is that...”

“Because you’re weak, I think?”

“Guu....”

The one who made Kensaki speechless was Kabeno Chihaya who reincarnated as a nurikabe ([wiki](#)). She was a girl. Before reincarnation, within the class, her certain measurement was extremely — — — lower than that Himemizu Rin’s, the person herself also had a complex about that, but as if to represent her inferiority complex, she became a nurikabe. She had a body as robust as Ryuzaki and Kagoi, but she had a weak point: her limbs were too short, she couldn’t get up when she fell.

There wasn’t much she could do in this venue preparation, but by making the best use of that large build of her, she could make a shade and became a rest area for the students and merchants.

“Like I thought, training.... It’s training. I have to get stronger....”

“You don’t need to forcibly get stronger like that, right?”

“My only worth is in battle. I still haven’t reach Phase 2 yet...”

Kensaki immediately resumed the job of carrying wooden boxes and unpacking them.

By the way, there were some students who remained at the branch school. However, they were arranged in order to earn time and contact instead of direct combat personnel. Actually, they wouldn’t be able to win even if they came attacking a Pawn all at once.

“Well, it’s about time that everyone started to feeling that soon.”

Pressing his glasses with his middle finger, Hanma Kentarou the centaur came along. Since the human days, he was a studious man, but after coming here he had become quite burly. He indeed had an intellectual speech and conduct, but when he got excited he would give a flying kick with his hind-legs in a manner not unlike that of a horse, that ability of his was mostly appreciated as a combat staff member.

“Presently, the burden is too concentrated on part of the students. We are treated as the secondary army. it will be essential to build a *win-win* relationship with an overall *spec-up, breakthrough*, or perhaps something *innovative*. I’m not planning to do something like self-enlightenment, but here, some *self-development* like....”

While he was droning on, Hanma started making hand movements like shaping ceramics on a pottery wheel, so Kensaki and Kabeno decided to ignore him. Hanma wasn’t a bad guy, but he tended to use katakana words and started conversations without any substance, so for the not-so-well-learned Kensaki, he was the type she was little weak against.

But well, when looking once again, this many idiosyncratic students had gathered well. In a place slightly away, the classmates were lining up illustrations drawn by Kahara and carved works by Gofunkawahara. Things that were dirty or its damage standing out in the merchandise the merchants had brought, Mitarai Azuki was washing them with rustle-rustle sound. Mitarai was a student who reincarnated as a Japanese youkai, Azukiarai ([wiki](#)). When she

got careless, her presence got thinner and she started making only the sound of something being washed so it was a little scary.

Via this trade preparation, the merchants also seemed to be relaxing their vigilance against them somewhat. Having said that, they didn't come to talk too much to the terrifying looking Kensaki too much. The one who came was only Remy at best.

"Ah, Kensaki-san, thank you for helping with the unpacking."
"Mu, don't worry about it."

With a list in hand, Remy started checking the contents of the wooden boxes Kensaki had opened.

"Speaking of which, Kaoru-san, Utsurogi-san and the others are not here?"
"N, ah, right. Those guys have other business...."

Kensaki glossed it over with ambiguous words.

In the end, they didn't tell the merchants that vampires were on this island. It didn't seem too sincere, but well, the argument that they couldn't badly cause a big uproar was understandable. It was vexing story though.

"Kuh, in the end, everything is due to my lack of ability, isn't it!?"

Dan, while striking the wooden box, Kensaki spontaneously shouted. However, the one who shouted was her head that was put in a place a bit away, so the merchants passing by the area was seriously scared.

Now, it was at that time.

The students sighted two objects came flying straight toward this sandy beach from the distance.

"Ne~ Kensaki-san, that?"

Being told so by Kabeno, Kensaki also raised her face. The face she tried to raised rolled down the wooden box and fell on the beach.

"Wah pu."
"Kensaki is troublesome..."
"Ahh, sorry Hakuba.... Ouch ouch ouch! Oi! Don't bite my hair!"
"Hifu fuu fuu hiharo. (it can't be help)"

Her ponytail was held in Hakuba's mouth, Kensaki was able to turn her gaze toward the blue sky. By that time, the two approaching objects had already become quite big. One was a coffin, the other was a treasure box. That coffin dazzling with golden decoration was Harao's, the treasure box one was....

"Hakoiri?"

"That's right."

"Wah pu."

The instant Hakuba opened his mouth, Kensaki's face was dropped on the sandy beach again.

From the sky, the coffin vigorously landed on the beach, while blowing up white sands, it stopped just exactly in front of Kensaki's face. Following that, the treasure box came down in the same manner. First to open was the coffin, a familiar face flew out from inside.

"Buuhaa...! It's hot and painful!"

"Kaoruko...!?"

"Ara Megumi, that's no good, pasting sand on your face like that then your girl power will drop to the ground? Girls must always have the we-are-onstage mentality."

Saying so, Kaoru, who had somehow entered Harao's coffin and came flying, picked up Kensaki's face, and politely wiped the sands.

The treasure box side as well, it blew up a cloud of sand and landed, stopping in front of the students and merchants. They knew this treasure box. Hakoiri Youko. The student who reincarnated as a mimic — a treasure box type monster. It wasn't as much as Harao, but she was a *young lady* born to a little wealthy house, in the class, she was called «*Hakoiri Ha-ko*», in the different world transference, she herself had become a box.

"O, oi Hakoiri, what happened?"

When Harui Yuka the harpy timidly asked, Hakoiri's lid popped open, from inside, a goblin — Gofunkawahara — came out while holding his head.

"Ahh, Gofunkawahara-kun! Sorry! That was rough! You're not hurt!?"

"No, don't worry about it.... Can you release the tongue for a bit?"

Inside the suddenly descended coffin was Okama Kaoru. And then Hakoiri and Gofunkawahara. Everyone presented inclined their head. The merchants stopped their work, and was quizzically gazing over here.

“Kaoruko, what kind of thing is this?”

“Aren’t you assigned to the branch school’s defense?”

When Kensaki and Hakuba unanimously asked, Kaoru suddenly raised her face.

“That, that’s right! Listen, it’s serious! 5 Pawns came to the branch school!”

“F, five!?”

Hearing that, even Kensaki was flustered at the reality.

Pawn was the lowest grade soldiers of the blood clan, but as mentioned before, they had combat ability that the majority of the students couldn’t reach them at all. The one who could oppose them were only part of the students such as Goubayashi, Harao, *etc.* But so far, the Pawns had never attacked the students of 2nd year class 4 in group.

Unrest spread among the students. And then, although the meaning of those words were unclear to them, the anxiety even started propagating to other merchants as well.

“I also thought about fighting, but Harao-kun stuffed me in the coffin.... Youko group is also the same?”

“Ahh, the same. We were standing by inboard, just when we thought about going to help, we were suddenly thrown outside with teleport....”

Instead of Hakoiri, Gofunkawahara answered while holding his head.

“Because we’re very likely to be killed without being able to do anything, I think it’s an appropriate judgement.”

“But then, the ones who remain at the branch school right now...!”

“Are only Harao-kun and Ozashiki-kun.”

“Unless Ozashiki-kun willingly move, he won’t be found so Harao must have left him to confirm the situation.”

The classmates who heard the story made a commotion, and then the students who were a bit far away also guessed the situation and were

gathering. The classmates in this place counted 21 in total, each of them floated their respective look. And the merchants who stared at that, had stopped their work as well.

They felt apologetic to the merchants, but now, they had no time to response to them. Now, just thinking about what they themselves should do was the best they could. Even if they headed there, it was apparent that they would only become hindrances.

“Hakuba, let’s go!”

“Uooo!?”

Kensaki snatched her own head from Kaoru’s hands, she then immediately straddled on Hakuba’s saddle.

“Go you say, oi Kensaki. You serious? It’s 5 Pawns, you know?”

“If there’s your recovery magic, we will be able to hold on!”

“My recovery magic has no effect on undead.”

“..... That’s right.”

Thereupon, Hanma Kentarou put Uozumi Masuyo the mermaid on his back and came out in front.

“Uozumi-san’s recovery magic is not as strong as Hakuba-kun, but it is effective to undead monsters. Let’s aim for a reliable result by trying several plans in parallel.”

Uozumi little sister nodded with a serious look. A mermaid riding a centaur. Quite picturesque.

“Oi oi.”

Gofunkawahara muttered with an amazed voice.

“You’re going to waste Harao’s consideration?”

“Even I’m not going to die in vain.”

Kensaki’s head holding under her armpit clearly claimed.

“But I don’t think silently turning a blind eye to it is the best at all.”

“I agree.”

Yukinoshita Suzuka the snow woman said even while half of her had melted.

“If it’s 5 Pawns, then even for Harao-kun, they’re not opponents he can win against. Either way, Akai-san will be kidnapped.”

“In that case, how about reporting to Ryuzaki and Goubayashi...”

“Ah, then, I will do that...”

Flap, spreading her wings, Kaminari Totoha the thunderbird volunteered. Even in the class, her flying speed was outstanding. She would be perfect for contact role. Gofunkawahara sighed and scratched his head.

“Okumura, what about you?”

“The answer is decided from the start debu.”

Okumura heavily came forward, Zeku also silently followed that.

“Anyway, if there are 5 Pawns, then even with Ryuzaki, Goubayashi and Harao all together, a hard fight is unavoidable debu. The insufficient part, we can only assist with the 20 of us debu.”

“So it’s like this in the end—.”

Kaoru who was sitting on the coffin, made a surprised face and said:

“Everyone has changed a lot since the time I left the base.”

“It’s growth ... I guess.”

Raising his glasses, Hanma said.

“Fuu. According to the calculation my clear brain has derived...”

“That kind of thing is fine.”

Kensaki chided Hanma with one hand.

“In general, Kaminari will go call Ryuzaki and the others. What we should do is assisting Harao who stayed behind and earning time. Don’t push yourself.”

The students strongly nodded.

“Ah, say, Kensaki-san, and Kaoru-san.... You’re saying the branch school is being attacked...”

“Sorry, Remy. I can’t give you the full story, but our classmates are in danger.”

While gazing forward, Kensaki said.

“Perhaps, we didn’t go through as much bloodshed as you guys, but.... If

possible, we don't want to lose any classmate again."

Was those words truly spoke for everyone in the class? Kensaki couldn't clearly assert that.

However, for Kensaki Megumi herself, that was unmistakably her true feelings. Kogane wasn't coming back. Washio would never return. Pain and sorrow, she had climbed over them, but the fact itself didn't fade, she couldn't let it repeat.

Therefore, she didn't have the slightest intention to die in vain.

Remy heard Kensaki's words and was staring blankly. Well, that happened. She had no idea what was happening after all.

"I'm sorry. Once we've finished our business, we will immediately return to help. We're not playing hooky, okay?"

Kaoru said with a smile.

"All right, let's go then!"

Kensaki grasped Hakuba's reins in one hand and pulled it. In stead of neighing, Hakuba shouted «*Gotcha-a!*», and vigorously started running on the sandy beach. Hanma chased after that, other students also simultaneously started running. Their speed was diversified, but without much time passed, the students was gone from the venue.

Bachi, just when there was sound of air popping open, feathers cladding blue lightning fluttered down from the sky. When one looked up, there was the giant shadow of a thunderbird flying toward the village.

After they left like a storm, one of the merchants who had been staring in wonder asked Remy this:

"In the end, what was that? They?"

"I don't know."

Remy dumbfoundedly muttered.

"I don't know, but. I think it's probably something important."

Eating Akai Asuka's kick, Goubayashi's giant body was lightly blown off. It was unknown where within that slender body that that kind of power was hiding, but looking at that, Sakuma was convinced. That for sure, was a part of the

physical ability that Akai normally concealed. Even the owner of strength that was virtually strongest in the class, was easily blown away.

“GUu...!”

Goubayashi who was slammed against the wall, was somehow able to get up while holding his body. His mantle trailed in the sea wind.

“I see...”

Akai, or to be exact, *‘something’* with her appearance floated a smile so gentle it didn’t seem like Akai at all and said that.

A gentle, kind smile. But when she looked at that, Sakuma felt herself getting goosebumps. She didn’t understand the reason. A chill as if her heart was gripped, attacked her body. Within that much gentle a smile, was a muddy, black swirling something.

“How do you do, I suppose I should say that. Friends of Asuka. I am the *‘King’* of the blood clan.”

‘King’. Sakuma instant understood the meaning of that word.

The *‘King’* of Akai and the vampire clan. The perfect superior who wielded absolute authority due to the constraints of blood. The tyrant who could completely dominate their heart and body. That, was the *‘King’*. That, for some kind of reason, was here in the appearance of Akai Asuka.

No, that body was very likely of Akai Asuka herself. The King used her body to talk. To be more exact, the King was making her mouth speak his words. Sakuma felt her heart rapidly chilled. Akai’s body was currently being manipulated by the King’s authority.

“No need to worry. I still haven’t obtained all of Asuka yet.”

Saying so, the *‘King’* raised his fingers and said:

“About 30 minutes at best. My control will hold for about that long. Therefore, I want to talk to you guys during that time.”

“What kind of...”

Sakuma could barely made a voice.

“...thing, is this?”

Immediately after speaking out, Sakuma Sachiko understood that something like simmering anger was welling up from the bottom of her heart. Simultaneously, she also felt ashamed of her own action and feelings so far.

The thing called dominating the heart, was surely being carry out right in front her eyes right now, it was *'this kind of thing'*. That always cool, yet kind, and more noble than anyone, that Akai Asuka's expression was being distorted. Her soul was being trampled. There was no way it was okay to coolly do this kind of thing. Perhaps, she too had been trying to do this kind of thing? When that thought cross her mind, that even turned into a dreadful feeling. The more she tried to refresh her thought, the more her anger increased. Presently, except for Sakuma, the only students on the deck were only Goubayashi and Harao. Both of them were wounded, and when it came to Harao, his state was having wounds all over his body. Even if Sakuma got angry here, there was no reason they could win against the *'King'* who could freely control Akai's power.

Even so, Sakuma was angry.

"It means exactly what I said. Because I can't move, you see. So I can't talk to you unless I do this."

"Return Asuka-chan's body."

"I'll return it once 30 minutes pass. Of course, it's temporary though."

The instant the *'King'* said so, vampires wearing black armor came out from the cabin. Thereupon, Sakuma again noticeably shuddered. There were also 4 vampires that appeared to be Pawns as well. If including the *'King'*, it's 5 people. This difference in war potential was all but hopeless.

Ignoring the astonished Sakuma, one Pawn paid respect to the *'King'*.

"*'King'*, I'm very sorry, your arms please."

"No need to be so formal. I'm just manipulating her limbs, it's not like this body is mine."

Saying so, Akai who was dominated by the *'King'* returned her expression to a hollow one and presented her right arm. That expression sometime ago as well, was probably one made intentionally. Perhaps, it was to bluntly thrust the situation called *'Akai was being dominated'* in front of them. His taste was bad.

“Naturally, I can’t bring myself to look at the lovely Asuka’s arms being wounded. Do it gently.”

“Yes...”

Saying so, the Pawn took out a syringe, and stabbed the arm Akai presented.

What? Sakuma thought, but she immediately understood.

Blood, they meant to take away her blood.

“Stop—!”

Sakuma started running.

Akai was able to escape from the King domination, was because she didn’t present blood to the King, and Sakuma had received that explanation from her. Setting aside the detail mechanism anyway, for the King to manipulate Akai’s body from long distance, her blood was indispensable.

This time, Akai being controlled was not because she had presented blood. Sakuma didn’t know what that was, but there was another different factor. Therefore, it only lasted for 30 minutes.

During that 30 minutes, they would extract her blood, and go present that to the King. That was the enemy’s aim.

“Evil———!”

“Step back—!”

Just before she fired magic, a Pawn who had run to intercept, bashed her in the face.

“UAaa...!”

Sakuma whose attacked was interrupted, rolled on the deck.

She raised her face. Red blood was extracted from Akai’s white arm, it was filling up the syringe. As Sakuma knew, human blood was a bit more dark in color, but Akai’s blood that had been extracted, was vivid as if it was shining.

The Pawns pasted their gaze on the trace where the syringe stabbed. It was a surreal scene, but no body was laughing.

“Now, Pawns. Thank you for your work today.”

The ‘King’, while appreciating the Pawn, said.

“I will talk with them here for a little while. You guys take that blood and return. The ship that the Pawn of Albadanba has arranged should be at the cliff in the south.”

“Yes—...!”

The Pawns respectfully bowed, and spread their wings all together. *You can’t*, Sakuma thought. If they could escape from this place. If they could bring back that ‘blood’. If they could present Akai Asuka’s blood to the King. Both her body and heart would be dominated. Sakuma tightly clenched her fist, she stood up.

“Wait—!!”

She chase the Pawns as they spread their wings and flew to the sky. But,

“It’s you who’s going to wait.”

Suddenly, she heard that voice close to her ear, a dull impact attacked Sakuma from behind.

“GUu...!”

Again, she was thrown against the deck. The ‘King’'s, Akai’s face, was right before her eyes.

“I want to talk you guys. I said that, didn’t I?”

Emotions completely disappeared, empty, vacant eyes. However, only her mouth was speaking words in a gentle tone. Akai’s white fish like fingers gently grabbed Sakuma’s chin. The other hand was caressing around her nape. Despite it being the fingers of her best friend Akai, her lovable Akai, only disgust was budding in Sakuma’s heart.

It was at that time.

“UOOOAAAAAAAAAAAAA—!!”

A shrieking yell. It was Goubayashi’s. Akai clearly raised her face. Sakuma also looked in his direction.

“Hou...”

At that moment, Goubayashi was throwing off his mantle. The abandoned

mantle made a dull sound one would never guess from its appearance, it sank into the deck. Immediately after he threw it away, the muscles of Goubayashi's prided body further swelled up, golden fighting spirit rising from his body gained momentum.

"You won't escaaaaaaape—!"

Goubayashi immediately kicked the deck and jumped into the air. The flying kick sending toward heaven was steeply rising just like a rocket. He meant to kick and knock down the Pawns that had escape toward the sky. «*Fuu*», the King laughed.

Wings grew from Akai's back. She probably was going to drag Goubayashi down before he reach the Pawns.

But, the instant she flew up, a ball-like thing came flying from out of nowhere and hit the 'King's' cheek.

It seemed like there wasn't much power. Akai didn't even staggered. But, it was too plenty as a surprise attack. During that slight delayed interval, Goubayashi's kick had caught one Pawn from behind. And then, Goubayashi who was supposed to fall down just like that, fixed his body in the air, he then released full powered fists one after another toward the 2nd Pawn.

"Eeeh!?"

Sakuma was surprised, but she immediately understood.

In a place a bit away, Harao who had collapsed face up on the deck, was raising his right arm. In his hand grasped a chipped ankh. Harao himself had wounds all over his body, but the telekinesis he brought forth didn't look unfavorable at all. Goubayashi was boosted by that power, he knocked down another Pawn, making it 3.

"Quite persistent, aren't you...!?"

A shivering voice of the 'King'. That time when Goubayashi was about to bash the 4th Pawn, the 'King' released black lightning which flicked off the ankh from Harao's hand. Losing his support, Goubayashi was going to fall. The 4th Pawn was disappearing straight toward the blue sky.

"Goubayashi-kun!"

Sakuma shouted his name, but he was safe, however, making a thunderous roar, he landed on the deck. The hull of the heavy cruiser branch school greatly shook.

“The Pawn who was escaping with *blood*, is that Pawn okay?”

“Yes.”

However, it seemed that only the target he was aiming for wasn't shot down. In front of their eyes, the King and Pawns was having such a conversation.

“Sorry. If I didn't take a surprise attack, I would have protected you guys as well.”

Saying so, the ‘King’ turned his eyes toward the cabin. A soccer ball ... or rather, a kemari was pinned under his foot, his arms crossed, a small build boy wearing Japanese clothes was there.

“Ozashiki? So that guy was here.”

Goubayashi muttered.

Ozashiki Dousuke the Zashiki-warashi ([wiki](#)). He was the ace striker of the soccer club, his family seemed to be operating a well-established ryokan, in the class, his shadow was indiscriminately thin, that was this man. The Pawns that were knocked down were 3. There was no sign of them flying up. Rather, it appeared that they were glaring over here with firm belief that they would never allow anyone to chase after the Pawn who had escape with *blood*.

“Sorry, Sakuma.”

Goubayashi muttered with a bitter face.

“As this rate, Akai...”

He shouldn't have heard about the mechanism of blood, but still, he would be able to grasp the opponents' aim to some degree. The Pawn was able to escape with blood, how much a threat would it lead to, it seemed he was able to guess to some extent.

“It's not Goubayashi-kun's fault, but...”

Sakuma also looked forward.

The opponents Pawns, two were wounded, one was in perfect state, and then

the '*King*' who was manipulating Akai's body. On this side, there was a wounded Harao and Goubayashi. Adding to that was Sakuma and Ozashiki, 4 people in total. Not only the difference in war potential was overwhelmingly lopsided. The opponent winning condition was only to detain them and let that Pawn escape.

The battle situation was essentially the worst case possible.

Chapter 61 — Dyeing the Blue Sea Crimson (II)

“However, children bones? It’s not something too pleasant to look at.”

After what happened, Nekomiya team was continuing to search the entire house. The main investigation location was the underground cavern, but they were reconfirming the documents that was in the house above ground as well. Toki — — — during the investigation, they had come to know his name as Tokihara, it also suggested that Tokihara probably had a relatively close relationship with the islanders of Delf Island. As the same time, he was deceiving the islanders and regularly causing victims to appear.

Unless they could prove that he was an atrocious vampire, then the one whose position was going to get was themselves.

Possibly, the ‘*atrocious vampire*’ was only one side of him, if they were to dig deeper, a part of his true self might have been enjoying the interaction with the islanders. But then, there was no obligation to dig deeper into it. It was certain that he had treated Inugami cruelly, it was also a fact he had put his hands on children.

“Inugami, are you okay?”

“Ahh, I’ll manage...”

Shokuzura was worrying about Inugami who was limply entrusting her back to the wall. Inugami was exhausted for sure, but all her limbs were still intact and there was no conspicuous external wound either. Only the circumstance about being made to bite a ringed gag was baffling, but according to her, that seemed to be done ‘*to collect saliva*’.

Werewolf saliva was said to contain components that could weaken vampires, perhaps, Tokihara meant to use that as a secret weapon against Akai. They could guess more than enough the heart of Inugami whose saliva was arbitrarily collected and arbitrarily used, but what words they could said to her? Even the eloquent Nekomiya didn’t have so many of those in her vocabulary.

“If that’s case, then Akai side is more worrying.”

“5 Pawns ... is it? It’s a number I don’t want to think about too much.”

Kinogasa, Kagoi and the others was also having that kind of conversation.

Certainly, Akai was worrisome. Not just Akai, but Harao, Kaoruko and everyone else who was in charge of the branch school's defense as well. They had sent Kyousuke and Rin over, if them, then they would never lose even with several Pawns as their opponents, however, there was the possibility that the Pawns might reach Akai earlier.

At times like these, they were made fully aware how inconvenient it was to not have any long distance communication method. Unlike the time at the actual school, they couldn't easily exchange information using SNS or phone calls. If they could contact Ryuzaki or Goubayashi, they would be able to bring a bit more people to help, Nekomiya thought.

She was feeling impatient, but now, she should properly do what she could do here. She switched her thinking.

Suddenly, Nekomiya started wondering what was beyond this cavern. This basement was a natural cavern of this island. Considering that the smell of salt water was strong, it probably connected to the sea.

"Saruwatari, please go together with me to the depth of this cavern for a bit."

"Aye, leave it to me. I've been bored to tears."

"Only you is a bit uneasy.... Kagoi too please."

"Aye."

The taciturn gargoyle (however, in the incident centered around Inugami, it had been proven that he was sullen (lecher) instead), Kagoi quietly nodded, Saruwatari who caught that was blatantly pouting.

"Nekomiya-san.... Be careful."

Hanazono told her with a worried look.

"Ahh, it's okay. We'll come right back if it looks dangerous. Everyone, please search a bit more for things that seems to become evidences about Tokihara."

Saying that much, Nekomiya stretched her key tail horizontally and started walking in the cavern.

There was the smell of salt water, but it wasn't just that. Nekomiya's keen sense of hearing could hear small sound of waves coming from the depth of the

cavern. Perhaps, the opening connected outside wasn't undersea. That meant, if one was capable of flight, this structure would allow them to go around from the seaside and enter the cavern. Nekomiya was feeling a little anxious about that.

"I wanted to talk."

As expressionless as ever, Akai Asuka's body announced that.

"But if that way wants to resort to violence, then let us respond to that."

Sakuma bit her lips, she glared back.

How dare he said that while borrowing Akai's mouth. She could feel only discomfort from that condescending and oppressive manner of speaking. If he did that kind of things in front of their eyes, then they would move in order to obstruct that, that much was obvious. Even then, he still didn't break his composed attitude, would that be because of the self-confidence born from the shield called overwhelming difference in ability? That attitude of his made this side even more uncomfortable.

One Pawn was getting away together with Akai's blood.

This place was only one island of an archipelago nation in the middle of the sea. Regardless of how tough and tenacious a life-form vampires were said to be, would it be possible for them to spread their wings and cross the ocean? Sometime ago, the '*King*' had said that a ship was prepared in the south side of the island. If he was to succeed in escaping to that place, that Pawn would be able to set sail even if he was alone. Speaking of the south side, '*Toki*'s residence should have been in that place. As long as they could contact Kyousuke group, surely, he would be able to do something. He would be able to do something, and yet. There was no mean to convey that, it was frustrating.

In front of them were 3 Pawns, and then the '*King*' who was taking over Akai's body for a limited time.

Goubayashi stood in front to protect Sakuma.

At the moment, he was mostly unhurt. Two of the enemy Pawns were wounded. If he was to join force with Harao who had finally rose up in the back,

it might not be a war potential they couldn't break through at all. But that was purely the case when there were '*only Pawns*'. Who knew how long they would last against Akai whose combat ability was an unknown factor, in the first place, this side victory condition wasn't to win the battle in this place.

"By the way, what happened to that Zashiki-warashi?"

"He erased his presence. He may launched a surprise attack again from somewhere though..."

Before they realized, Ozashiki the Zashiki-warashi had already vanished. Since these were not opponents he could win against by clashing directly from the front, Sakuma was rather feeling relieved about that instead. But, the '*King*' only snorted a little.

"That's not a problem. You guys take that Pharaoh. I'll take care of the ogre and succubus."

"Yes—."

The three Pawns said that, and aimed at Harao who was standing in the back. For Harao who was already severely wounded, it was impossible for him to oppose them. *I have to disturb them somehow*, Sakuma tried to act, but the '*King*' quickly approached her.

"Asuka often told me about her human friends."

"Kuh...!"

Her arm was grabbed, she tried to brush it away, but that arm which was more slender than Sakuma's, exhibited an incredible grip strength.

"You are that '*Sachi*'? From what I heard, I thought you are a bit more timid though."

A voice one could never think to be uttered from Akai's vocal cords, a viscous voice coiling around one's skin. This discomfort probably didn't come only from the strong humidity. The eyes of the hijacked Akai was hollow, but somewhere in that tone was showing a touch of evaluation.

Goubayashi didn't just silently watching. Golden fighting spirit bursted out from his body and violently hit against the '*King*'. But even that was caught by the '*King*' using only one hand, resulting only a little knock-back.

“I have told Asuka many times that she should quickly call you guys over to this side, but she stubbornly continued to refuse it. I was surprised. Asuka who was that obedient to me, defied me for the first time, you see.”

Akai was obedient.

From the point of view of Sakuma who knew her usual self well, that seemed like a mismatched adjective absolutely unsuitable to her image. Akai Asuka never deemed it good to be controlled by anyone, she was listless, but an owner of a noble mind. Against the *‘King’* who could declare her to be *‘obedient’*, a bottomless sense of discomfort was increasing further.

Still catching Goubayashi’s fist with one hand, the *‘King’* forcefully pulled Sakuma’s body closer.

“Even so, that is Asuka’s selfishness, so I’m going to keep listening to it. However, Asuka has discarded the promise. For some part of that punishment, I’m going to have her make up for it with her body, but of course, that alone is insufficient. She’s a strong girl, you see. That’s why I want you to cooperate as well.”

The viscous voice was speaking politely for sure, but that was also a threat without allow any objection.

No, if he felt like it, he could kidnap Sakuma by brute force. Considering that, then this wasn’t even a threat. This was word an absolute authority had spoken, leaving only its outward appearance as a compromise, its contents was a decided matter. In order words, it was the word of a King.

“How about it?”

“I hate it.”

She clearly said. This wasn’t only her own will. Akai would definitely said the same thing.

Akai Asuka couldn’t answer right now. Therefore, she answered by herself.

“Really.”

The *‘King’* answered shortly. Akai Asuka’s hollow expression didn’t change one bit.

“In that case,”

When the ‘King’ started speaking, the hull of the heavy cruiser branch school greatly shook.

“Muu...”

Everyone on the deck greatly lost their balance. At that moment, Goubayashi roared.

“UOOOOAAAAAAAAAAa!!”

Kicking his log-like legs on the deck, he performed a dynamic flexible movement in the air. With spinning rotation, his knees bent greatly, he launched exactly like a rocket. A screw-type drop-kick thoroughly using his entire body as a spring, strongly knocked down the side of Akai’s face.

Immediately after that, the strength gripping Sakuma’s arm slackened. Sakuma shook it off with all her strength and took distance. The ‘King’ tried to grab Sakuma again and reached out, but his hand was repelled by a kemari that came flying from nowhere.

As a result of the rotation, Goubayashi was falling face-down, he propped both hands on the floor and made another leap, then landed on the deck.

“Go, Goubayashi-kun, is like a pro wrestler...”

“When I was taking shelter, I received initiation from that female knight.”

The knights of this world seemed to use drop-kick.

Without pausing, Goubayashi turned around and daringly launched himself upon the 3 Pawns surrounding Harao. Bashing a wounded one-arm gone Pawn from the side, he took the stance to protect Harao. Sakuma looked at the ‘King’. Neither was he holding his head nor was he in pain. It might just be natural, after all, he was only remote controlling Akai’s body.

No, that’s strange.

If he was simply controlling the doll-like Akai from long distance, then when he ate Goubayashi’s kick just now, he shouldn’t have even twitch. That was none other than the evidence that Akai’s body had escaped from the domination of the ‘King’ for but a moment by receiving impact from outside, right?

That's right. I must not forget. The one in front of me isn't the 'King' but Akai Asuka. She is the always cool and kind best friend I'm proud of.

In that case, surely, my voice will reach her.

I will absolutely take her back. And her blood as well, I will never let it get to the 'King'.

"You better not anger me too much."

The 'King' quietly informed them.

"That is,"

Sakuma looked at the hollow eyes of Akai, she clearly said.

"What you said because you don't want to get angry. You think it's uncool to be angered by someone like me..."

"Smart mouth is the bane of one's body...!"

Strong anger welled up in the 'King's' words, almost at the same time, the branch school's gangway vigorously dropped. Needless to question what, sound of hooves kicking the gangway was rapidly soaring up. Next moment, a ball-like something was vigorously thrown at the 'King'. That wasn't Ozashiki's kemari.

It was a human head.

"Sakuma-aaaaa-!!"

The thrown human head shouted, at the same time, a headless knight riding a unicorn raised her sword and slashed the 'King'.

It was the public morals committee member, Kensaki Megumi. Not only her, the one she was riding was Hakuba Kazusumi, following after him was Hanma Kentarou galloping with Uozumi Masuyo onboard. They were the students who had headed for the preparation of the venue. Then, the tremor of the branch school's hull just now was also....

"You all right? Sakuma!"

"Ha, Hakuba-kun. It's serious, Asuka-chan..."

"Ahh, I can vaguely grasp the situation."

Hakuba directed sharp eyes toward the 'King'.

“Akai’s body is taken over, and is being manipulated.... Or something along those lines.”

“A man is using brute force to do whatever he wants with a woman’s body, I can’t overlook that as a public morals committee member.”

What an amazing comprehension capability. Seriously helpful.

Crossing the gangway, the students continuously boarded the heavy cruiser branch school. Many students rushed into the battle with the Pawns. Uozumi younger sister healed Harao’s injuries, the fully recovered Goubayashi and Harao completely separated the 3 Pawns. The situation transitioned to 1-on-1, the most seriously injured Pawn who had a big hole opened on his chest, was forced to square off against the martial factions, i.e., Okumura and Zeku.

“Asuka’s, classmates, is it...”

The ‘King’ answered in a calm, yet slightly stifled irritated voice.

“I don’t know who you are, but prepare yourself.”

Hakuba thrust his horn straight toward the ‘King’, he said.

“Akai, is a precious gyaru virgin nowadays. Just thinking that she is being swung around by a guy like you is already a big loss for the world.”

“Don’t look at Asuka with those eyes...!”

Hakuba’s instigation skill was quite high, but the situation wasn’t changing for the better. Although it looked like they would be able to cope with the Pawns somehow, the ‘King’ in front of them could fully use Akai’s power. Perhaps even the power the person herself had been unconsciously saving due to the Blood Crave Illness.

Now, what they should do wasn’t to pin down the ‘King’.

During that short time when the ‘King’’s anger was directed at Hakuba, Sakuma shouted.

“Kaoru-chan! Uozumi-kun! Sugiura-san!”

“Sachi, you called!?”

Jumping out at the foremost was her best friend Okama Kaoru. There was no time for delay. She rapidly gave out instructions.

“One Pawn is trying to escape from the south using a ship. Go ahead of him and destroy that ship!”

“Understood!”

Perhaps, the ones who shook the hull were Uozumi Sakeichiro the gillman, Sugiura Aya the scylla, and the sahagin unit under Kaoru’s command. Precisely underwater was where they could demonstrate their potential. If they were to move along the coast, perhaps, they would be able to move at speed rivaling Kaminari Totoha who possessed the highest speed in the class.

If they move along the coast toward the south, they would definitely be able to find that ship.

As expected, only this moment, even the ‘King’ looked impatient.

“I won’t let you go...!”

The ‘King’ roused Akai’s body and tried to chase. However,

“Asuka-aaaaaa—!!”

A shadow vigorously nosedived from the sky. Irritated, the ‘King’, tried to brush away that shadow.

It was Harui Yuka the harpy. Just before his hand almost grazed her body, she shouted again.

“Stop joking, stop joking around! Even I, am Asuka’s friends!”

For a moment, Akai’s arm suddenly stopped.

“I haven’t know you for as long as Sakuma, I don’t have power like Utsurogi, but still!”

Akai’s arm moved. Harui was strongly beaten, she groaned.

Just an instant. Harui had stopped him for just an instant. But during that time, Kaoru, Uozumi and the others had separated from the branch school, and were vigorously sliding on the sea. The ‘King’ clicked his tongue slightly and spread out blood red wings. *Gyunn*, raising wind, he flew to the sky.

“It reached...?”

Sakuma muttered.

That moment, Harui's voice had certainly reached Akai. Just like how Goubayashi's kick had produced a slight gap. Akai had escaped the control during that moment. Even so, if that moment existed.

There might be a chance.

"Harui!"

Slightly lagged behind, Hebetsuka came along. Yes, Akai's friends weren't just herself.

"Harui-san, Hebetsuka-san."

Sakuma gazed at Akai's back as Akai went after Kaoru.

"Please, lend me your strength."

Chapter 62 — Dyeing the Blue Sea Crimson (III)

“King—!”

Looking up at Akai’s body that had spread its wings and was flying away, a Pawn tried to follow after it. He was forcibly kept in check by Goubayashi Genshuu’s fist that came bashing from his flank.

“You’re not going...!”

“Guh...!?”

An ogre with big frame close to 3 meters in height. That right arm cladding in golden fighting spirit was as thick as a log. Having outstanding combat ability even within the class, Goubayashi was confronting a Pawn in a perfect 1-on-1 form.

The ‘*King*’ escaped. To be precise, he was chasing after Kaoru group. To chase after him, Sakuma and Harui continuously took off from the deck. Kaoru group’s objective was to destroy the ship prepared for the vampire’s escape, the ‘*King*’s objective was to obstruct that, and Sakuma group’s objective was to detain that ‘*King*’.

The deck of the heavy cruiser branch school had already turned into a melee state. The remaining Pawns numbered 3. They had to soundly defeat those 3. They couldn’t afford to let them escape this place. Goubayashi was challenging the least damaged Pawn among the remaining Pawns.

The Pawn barely managed to avoid Goubayashi’s fist, black lightning was running between his hands, he was glaring at Goubayashi.

Goubayashi had once suffered a defeat against a vampire Pawn. That was when he left the base and was walking in the wasteland of the continent together with Kaoruko. His body freedom was taken away by the black lightning the opponent released, he even fainted, and was completely defeated. For him to be alive like this was none other than thanks to the intervention of the human knights. It was the result of luck.

At that time, he was sheltered by the female knight in her prime, until his injuries healed, he spent time in human territory. It was an incident happened

in a short time of less than one week, but by the time his injuries healed, he had got the female knight — who could brawl with the vampires more than equal — to give him training, and had endeavored to improve his heart, technique and physique.

The result was his present self.

Goubayashi gripped his fist and glared back at the Pawn.

'Fighting spirit' itself was something manifested by his Phase 2 ability. All the knights Goubayashi had interacted with, used their own tempered body and articles tempered by master craftsman as weapons. The super heavy mantle Goubayashi had and the drop-kick he used some time ago were all things given by that female knight.

“(Let’s see how much I’ve grown here.... No, that’s not right)”

This clenched fist is for the sake of my friends.

In the end, he couldn’t discard the *‘oni’* nesting inside himself. Goubayashi Genshuu, while being a son of a temple, was quick to resort to violence since his childhood. Coupled with his large physique, he was extraordinarily strong in a fight, he started kenpo in order to gain self-discipline, by the passage of years, he gained composure, gradually, he had mellowed out, but still, there was a part of himself that found a little joy at the prospect of fist-fighting with strong people.

If the result of those was his present appearance, then it was inevitable.

The various things in his soul was irrelevant here and now.

The enemy in front of him was to be defeated. Otherwise, someone was going to be sacrificed again.

That simple truth was born in Goubayashi’s heart, clearing away all doubts.

“Let’s go—!!”

Goubayashi kicked the deck and vigorously closed in on the Pawn. The Pawn released black lightning that was cladding on his arms. Cladded in golden fighting spirit, his pectoralis major muscle caught that lightning. His body felt numb, but that wasn’t enough to stop Goubayashi’s big frame.

“Fuun!!”

Buon, air ripped, fist groaned.

The fist shook off the slight resistance and smashed down the sound barrier. The fist he unleashed crashed into the Pawn’s black armor. That armor that had rejected all and every attacks of other students, got cracked. The Pawn’s expression markedly warped by the impact.

“OOOOOOOo—!!”

Continuing, the 2nd attack came. The Pawns crossed his arms in order to guard the cracked part, Goubayashi’s left fist struck against it.

“Guu—...!”

His fist scooped up from somewhat below. The Pawn’s body floated in the air for a moment.

To further pursuit the exposed armor, Goubayashi drove in his knee. Right after attacking, he straightened his knee, swinging it sideways and kicked the vampire flying. The armored body of the Pawn crashed into the wall. Still, the Pawn immediately stood up, while gathering black lightning in both arms, he glared at Goubayashi. Soon, the lightning converged, forming a spear, the Pawn released it like throwing. As Goubayashi tried to take avoidance movement, the melee behind him crossed his mind. *I must not avoid*, he stopped his feet, that instant, the black spear stabbed his thick chest.

“.....—!!”

The spear reached neither his heart nor lung. Taking advantage of that gap, the Pawn produced the 2nd spear. It seemed he intended to keep attacking from long-distance like this. In no time, the 2nd spear was shot, to repelled that, Goubayashi concentrated fighting spirit to his right arm.

“Fuun—!!”

“What—...!”

The thrown black spear was knocked down by his sword hand. The Pawn faltered for a moment, Goubayashi pulled out the spear stabbed in his chest and threw it away. The spear — which was originally energy — disappeared like

melting into the air.

Goubayashi further compressed golden fighting spirit to his right fist.

This golden energy which was called fighting spirit was written in the documents left in Ryuzaki's room. In the memo about Phase 2 ability Akai left behind, Goubayashi's Phase 2 ability was written as «*Fighting Spirit Awakening*».

On the other hand, in the memo left behind by the human girl named Selena, there was description about the energy called fighting spirit. It was a method to divert life energy to use in combat, and was said to be used by a combat ethnic group in the eastern part of the continent.

According to what he read in the documents, there were various usages for fighting spirit. If it could become an armor cladding one's body, it could also become a weapon. Now, Goubayashi was consolidating all the fighting spirit that was covering his body to his right fist. The protection of his body was completely neglected. On top of that, he closed his eyes, attempting to concentrate his mind.

In the battlefield, even just a few seconds of opening could cost one's life. But Goubayashi invested all of those few seconds to strengthen his fighting spirit. He spent the precious few seconds for a single attack. The fighting spirit covering his right fist even rolled up the surrounding wind, making rumbling sound.

Suddenly, his eyes opened. Goubayashi saw the Pawn releasing the 3rd black spear toward him.

“UOOOOOOOOO—!!”

Brandishing his fist, Goubayashi charged at the Pawn. The fist that was grandly pulled back, thrust straight ahead, it pulverized the black spear. In long stride, the first step started from the right, 2nd step, 3rd step.

Simultaneously with the 3rd step, his fist stabbed to the Pawn's chest.

“Gahaa—...!!”

Vampires would die if their heart was crushed. This one merciless attack had faithfully put that advice to practice.

The Pawn, with look ready for death, glared at Goubayashi. Covered in blood

the Pawn had spat out, Goubayashi calmly looked back.

“...! ...!!”

Trying to say something, yet no words formed from his throat, the Pawn soon stopped moving.

He had killed an almost human one. He killed those who could come to a mutual understanding with human.

Goubayashi quietly joined his hands (to pray) in front of the person who would soon become ashes, and not a trace that it was once a human would remain.

“You ... why are you alive!!?”

A Pawn with one arm missing looked like he saw an absolutely incomprehensible someone or something, he shouted.

The fact that a handicapped opponent was turned over to him, was very unsatisfactory to Harao Masaki. This flow where they naturally brought it to 1-on-1 was a proof that the many classmates of 2nd year class 4 had functioned properly for the first time. But the enemy with all limbs intact became Goubayashi's opponent, the one turned over as his responsibility was a Pawn missing an arm.

Well, fine. To let the citizen take the credit is also important.

While raising the broken ankh, Harao answered this to the Pawn's question:

“Because I'm well-bred.”

“You joke...!”

The Pawn projected black lightning in energy form. A hemispherical barrier expanded right in front of Harao obstructed the lightning.

Thanks to Uozumi younger sister's recovery magic, his condition was coming back. Although recovery by water-attribute spirit magic wasn't as effective as life magic Hakuba used, it was effective to undead like Harao as well, so it was helpful. That Uozumi younger sister still remained on the deck and was in charge of healing the wounded students.

“If t's 1-on-1, there won't be any mercy.”

“Tch...!”

Did he judge that long-distance battle would be disadvantageous? The Pawn, while one-armed, came closing in on Harao in one go. The Pawn quickly sent forth a fist, however, Harao brushed that away with one arm. Unintentionally, the Pawn pitched forward, Harao further pushed his back, making him eat dirt. Though his wounds healed, the broken ornaments decorating his body and the torn bandages weren't fixed yet. He was shabbily dressed as if his tomb had just been robbed, yet Harao was magnificently puffing up his chest. Turning both arms around his back, he was striding around.

"You—...!"

The Pawn bashed him from behind, but Harao nimbly avoided it, all the while keeping his arms around his back.

"Don't put on airs ... ugo—."

Without letting him finish his words, Harao sent a backhand blow toward his face like a whip. Harao kicked to further pursue, but the Pawn recovered his crumpled posture and firmly caught that kick.

"Mu..."

Harao's physical ability wasn't outstanding at all. Therefore, his foundational tactics centered around parrying. He took advantage of the gap in the opponent attack and quickly dealt a blow of his own, when their balance collapsed, he pursued. Therefore, when the enemy rebuilt their posture, this time would be his turn to expose a fatal opening.

The Pawn scooped up Harao's leg with one arm, turning him over on the deck. Leaving no time after he collapsed, the Pawn released black lightning. Lightning extended toward Harao, it covered him as it to paint out his body.

"Ha—Harao-kun!"

Uozumi Masuyo shouted his name.

"Thy worry is unnecessary."

However, Harao raised the chipped ankh and blew away the Pawn who was releasing lightning.

"Y, you...—! Why can you still move like that...!"

Still managed to recover his footing somehow, the Pawn spilled words of resentment.

“Blood energy is an attack that can stop monsters’ movement and neutralize them, is it not!? Why are you...”

“T’s the difference in education.”

Harao easily informed him, he crossed both arms in front of his chest and slowly stood up. His body remained straightened, it looked exactly like it was being pulled up by string, a very eerie manner of standing up. And again, he turned his left arm around his back, raised up the ankh clasped in his right hand.

“O foolish one who disturbs the slumber of mine fellows, thee can taste the wrath of Harao.”

In response to the words that had been recited like a spell, the Pawn’s body was slowly lifted in the air. The black armored vampire struggled, but he couldn’t do any resistance other than that. Harao glared at the Pawn floating in the air, he exerted much more telekinesis power.

“Mun!”

“Ga-...!”

The heart which was the source of life was crushed. In the air, the Pawn’s body jumped, and stopped moving, as it were, it smoothly crumpled and became ashes.

“.....”

Harao returned both arms to his back, he motionlessly watched the ashes that were once a vampire, soon, as if his string had been cut, he threw his body down on the deck.

“Harao-kun!?”

Uozumi Masuyo slide on the deck and rushed over.

“Oi Harao!”

“Harao-kun, pull yourself together!”

“Harao-kun!”

Hebitsuka, Hanma, Kahara rushed over, and raised up the upper body of the

collapsed Harao.

But immediately after that, from under the golden mask Harao was wearing, a characteristic snoring sound was heard. Everyone suddenly got awkward and looked at each other. The mermaid Uozumi separated the hand raising Harao's upper body, the back of his head crashed into the deck big time, even so, Harao only continued to snore carefreely.

"FUOOOOOOO—!!"

"Tch—...!"

Okumura's full body ramming attack crashed into the heavily wounded Pawn. The opponent was wounded. This side won in number. Even under those conditions, the war potential was rivaling. There was just that much difference in combat ability between the students who had yet to wake up to Phase 2 and a vampire Pawn. The Pawn had a fist-sized hole opened in his chest, but he caught Okumura's tackle with both arms and held him down with brute force.

"You're foolhardy, but at this degree...!"

"Gaaah—!"

Black lightning ran from the Pawn's two arms. Okumura screamed, he kneeled down.

".....—!"

That moment, from exactly a blindspot of the Pawn, a sphere was shot, drawing an arc. That was Ozashiki Dousuke's presence erasing killing shoot, but the Pawn showed a faint smile and slightly diverted his body. The kemari didn't crashed into the Pawn, and only slightly grazed him.

"Impatient? You didn't completely kill your bloodlust."

"No, this is good debu."

However, the one to laugh was Okumura.

"What..."

At the place the Pawn was gazing at, was a wall that wasn't supposed to exist until just now. That wall that had been slowly sliding, repelled the kemari just like a battledore, the repelled ball head toward a treasure chest put in a corner

of the deck. The lid of the chest vigorously sprung up, launching the ball up high.

That was Kabeno Chihaya the nurikabe ([wiki](#)) and Hakoiri Youko the mimic. Still didn't know what they were trying to do, however, in order to obstruct that plan, the Pawn thrust Okumura away.

“You're not going anywhere!”

Extending spider threads entwined the Pawn's arm. The threads Kumosaki the arachne took out, were strengthened by «*Weaving*» power of Kikino the kikimora ([wiki](#)). In that moment, Mitarai Azuki performed liquid coating with water attribute magic to the launching ball.

“This thing...!!”

The Pawn laid bare his irritation, he pulled the threads coiling around his arm. The two powerless girls screamed and were about to be dragged along, but Zeku the ogre joined in the tug of war, all the while growling. The power was rivaling for a little while.

“Hakuba, gooo—!”

“ORYAAAAAAAAA—!!”

Kicking the deck floor, Hakuba, with Kensaki onboard, ran past. The unicorn horn that was said to stab to death even elephant, stabbed toward the arm of the Pawn who was trying to tore off Kumosaki's thread with the other arm. Kensaki's sword was swung down from the opposite side, sandwiching the Pawn's arm from both side.

“DEEEEEI—!!”

Sure enough, the duo's attack aiming for the joint of the armor, succeeded in knocking down one arm of the Pawn.

“Guh, y—you bastards—...!”

“Do it nooww! Yukinoshita!!”

Withdrew from the Pawn's attack range, Kensaki shouted. Aiming for the ball that was launched high in the air, a volleyball club member Yukinoshita Suzuka the hot-blooded snow woman jumped. The cold air in her surroundings received sunlight and glittered, it froze the water coating the ball.

“Burster Smash!!”

Yukinoshita released a full power smash. But the Pawn avoided it again. The ball — coated with water and cold air — impacted on the deck right next to his feet. Seeing that and landed on the deck, Yukinoshita — even while being half melted — crossed her arms, and showed a daring smile.

“It’s minus 1 trillion and 20 million degree freezing ray, don’t you know what will happen!?”

“That temperature doesn’t exist!” [Rants]

“Moreover, what halfhearted number!”

Even while being retorted, truly as Yukinoshita had declared, the impacted ball exploded cold air and froze the Pawn’s feet in one go.

“What—...!”

The Pawn’s voice was filled with surprise. A silver snow world was suddenly summoned to this tropical maritime nation. Ice covered till over his knee, the Pawn became completely immobilized.

“All right, now’s the time, avoid it everyone!!”

In response to Gofunkawahara’s shout, the students who were fighting that Pawn immediately evacuated in all direction.

Gofunkawahara and the goblin unit under his command were at the gun turrets. Machine gun muzzles pointed at the immobilized Pawn from all directions. After confirming that everyone had already evacuated the shooting line, Gofunkawahara swung down his raised arm.

“Fireee———!!”

The 25 mm machine guns lined up on the deck simultaneously spat out bullets. The bullets came to be the final finishing blow to the Pawn’s black armor that was cracked in the fierce battle. Soon, the armor broke, bullets rushed to his heart that had been protected by the thick armor.

Even his death agony was drown out by the roaring sound, during that time, some students averted their eyes, some ascertained till the end while grimacing.

“Stop!”

With Gofunkawahara's instruction, the shooting exactly stopped. Wrapped up in ice, the Pawn's body had already returned to ashes at some point in time.

"...We, we won...? With our power..."

Kensaki timidly muttered, Hakuba also nodded.

"It appeared that way."

"Victory of friendship is wonderful!"

With clenched fists and a fearless smile, Yukinoshita's body had already become syrupy.

"Oi Gofunkawahara, you're firing bullets to the deck! *Thanks* to that, the floor is all tatter isn't it!?"

"My bad, my bad, Kuremori, I could only do it that way..."

Looking at the situation, both Goubayashi and Harao seemed to have just finished defeating their respective Pawn opponent. Of the Pawns who had attacked the branch school, 3 had been successfully crushed. Though 2 of them were wounded, this could still be said as a brilliant achievement.

The students, for now, started hooraying. However, Kensaki grimly looked up at the sky.

Indeed, the branch school defense had succeeded. But it would be completely meaningless if Akai's person was taken away.

Sakuma's instruction showed concern about the escaping Pawn. That is to say, even if Sakuma and the others took back Akai here, it would still be meaningless if that Pawn could escape this Delf Island.

Of course, battles of this scale had already occurred, so Ryuzaki group also needed to somehow win the trust of chieftain Bergel and the islanders.

"(The battle is not over yet, is it...?)"

Kensaki bit her lips and prayed for the success of her classmates.

Was it possible to catch up with Akai's escaping speed? Sakuma was anxious about that, but her back was getting bigger. Possibly, her physical ability performance itself might have started to decline due to Blood Crave Illness. If it was left alone like this, it might even exert big influence to her life activity itself.

Sakuma Sachiko and Harui Yuka, were chasing after Akai Asuka's body which was being manipulated by the *'King'*.

Akai's body itself would return to normal after 30 minutes. The problem was when the *'King'* used that body to join force with the Pawn that had escaped ahead. If the *'King'* joined him, then Kaoru, Uozumi and the others would be helpless to oppose them. Even if they were to succeed in taking back Akai's blood in some form, if the *'King'* was there, the vampires could just extract it again.

Sakuma didn't know how long it would take for that *'30 minutes'* to pass. For this reason, she and Harui had to detain the *'King'* so that he wouldn't get any further than this.

"UOOOOOo—!"

Harui spread her wings and vigorously accelerated. It wasn't as much as Kaminari, but her maximum flying speed was considerably fast.

"Return Asukaaaa!"

The *'King'* received Harui's flying tackle, however, he was unfazed. Instead, he decelerated slightly and strongly grabbed Harui's neck, raising her up.

"Gauu..."

"Don't get in the way...!"

"«*Evil Flare*»!!"

Sakuma recited the spell and threw black flame at the *'King'*. Unable to completely avoid that, the King let go of Harui's neck. Harui tackled again and knocked Akai's body to the ground. Smashing down tree branches, Akai Asuka's body fell to jungle area of Delf Island.

As expected, her physical ability was gradually declining. Akai's body was also approaching its limit. The fact that she was weakening itself was good news, but they couldn't afford to let the *'King'* use Akai's power anymore than this. Sakuma and Harui chased after the falling *'King'* and descended to the dense forest.

"You guys are very persistent..."

So said the *'King'* while brushing away the dirt stuck on Akai's sailor uniform.

“We won’t let you go any further. I’ll have you return Asuka-chan.”

Sakuma said in a resolute attitude, but Akai’s body expressionlessly snorted.

“She’s not your property.”

“As if she’s yours either!”

“No, she’s mine.”

The ‘*King*’ scoffed at the angry Harui.

“Asuka is my property. I don’t want to let you do as you wish anymore than this.”

“You—...!”

Leaving it to anger, Harui spread her wings. She who was trying to attack, was reproved by Sakuma.

“Wait, Harui-san!”

But, it was too late. Before Sakuma could stop her, Harui had already leaped at the ‘*King*’.

“Fufu, just like a boar...”

Manipulated by the ‘*King*’, Akai’s body slowly raised her arm. Immediately, black energy was born under Akai’s feet. That which was seen many times over when other vampires used it, created the form of an ominous crest. The ‘*King*’ further pushed his arms forward, the crest that was born underfoot, pressed on Harui’s body.

“UAa—...!”

Again, Harui screamed.

Even if it was the same black energy, his usage was remarkably different. That crest which was created using Akai’s body, fixed Harui’s body in a form similar to crucifying. The ‘*King*’ forcefully pulled back his arm, the crucified Harui flew toward the ‘*King*’ like being attracted by a magnet.

“Fuu—...!”

“Gaah—...!”

As Harui flew toward him, the ‘*King*’ mercilessly kicked her body. Again, Harui crashed into the crest wall. The ‘*King*’ briskly walked up to the crucified Harui,

he grabbed her hair and pulled up her drooping head, then he further drove in a knee strike to her defenseless stomach.

“Goa—...!”

Harui spread her eyes wide. Sakuma unintentionally shouted.

“Stop!”

The ‘*King*’ snorted with Akai’s body.

“It’s your fault to have chased after me. Your worry is unnecessary. I’ll give them a beating but I’m not going to kill...”

“If you use anymore power than that, even Asuka-chan’s body will be affected, isn’t it?”

Akai was suffering from Blood Crave Illness. If the factors were to return to ground state by the usage of power, its symptoms were going to rapidly worsen. And that would eventually affect the vampire’s life activity itself.

“What, even if some after-effect remains, it’ll be hemiplegia, I guess. Preferably it does come to that, then the risk of Asuka escaping from my place will decrease so it’s a good thing, don’t you think?”

Manipulated by the ‘*King*’, Akai’s fingers slowly traced her body line. It was a discomfoting scene. To save Harui, as well as Akai, Sakuma started chanting attack magic.

There was a way to save Akai. But to do that, she had to take back Akai’s consciousness from the ‘*King*’s domination even if it was but a moment. Trying that without any preparations or rehearsals was much too risky. She was going to prepare as perfect as possible and challenge it, the chance was only once. First thing first was to rescue Harui.

However,

Even if she was to help out Harui here, would they really be able to get any opening from the ‘*King*’?

The ‘*King*’, regardless of whatever was to happen to Akai’s body, didn’t look like he was going to slacken that power. He would never try to save power according to progress of Blood Crave Illness, therefore, clashing against him head on was dangerous. That was a miscalculation.

In that case,

“«*Evil Flare*»!!”

Sakuma released magic toward the sky. The black flame passed through between the trees, reached the blue sky, and popped open in heaven.

Chapter 63 — Because We're Friends

In the underground cavern, the footing was getting more rugged. They had come to this area where human hands hadn't touched at all. She didn't mean to walk stealthily in particular, but the way Nekomiya walked made no sound. The paw pads perfectly exhibited its silencing function.

On the other hand, Kagoi, being a gargoyle, his footsteps were making big echo in the cavern. It was the same for Saruwatari the Hanuman as he was wearing shoes. They had been silently walking without saying anything in particular, then suddenly, Kagoi raised his voice.

"...Say, Nekomiya, how far do you want to go?"

"Till the ocean ... or so I want say, but if my nose and ears are believable even for a bit, it should not be so far away."

Although she said that, she was also keeping in mind the choice to turn back in case the walking distance was too far.

They had succeeded in defeating Tokihara, but if one was to ask if the situation was good, then that wasn't the case. Nekomiya didn't know what kind of development was going to happen with the attack to heavy cruiser branch school by the 5 Pawns. The same applied to Ryuzaki's conference. Setting aside the former anyway, for the later, they had to find evidence that Tokihara was a vampire in his hideout.

Presently, the most effective things were, as expected, children bones that were piling up high like a mountain. It was unclear why he didn't dispose of those and left them behind, but it was a fact that Tokihara was hiding those in the basement, therefore, they could only try to convince the islanders using that.

After they walked forward for a little while.

"Nekomiya, it's a passionate light."

The somewhere mistaken hot-blooded youth hanuman, Saruwatari Futa used a mysterious adjective to express the light flowing in from up ahead.

"Apparently, we've finally come to a place that is connected to outside."

“The sound of waves is getting much more clearer as well.”

The pace they were advancing through the meandering passage with got a little faster. It was twisted, but the part that there was no byway could be said to be a little fortunate.

Light flowing in, sound of waves, and scent of sea water. The three soon came to a slightly wide space. As Nekomiya had expected, there was an entrance of this cavern there. Most of the open space was filled with sea water, by proceeding further on top of the sea, it was possible to leave outside. Perhaps, this place was a tunnel opened on a steep cliff. Nekomiya remembered that the south side of Delf Island was a slightly high cliff. Barnacles and seaweeds were sticking to the wall of the cavern, indicating that the water volume would increase a bit at high tide. The short passage to leave from the open space to outside itself would be filled with water at high tide and closed up.

Well, that alone was still okay.

A strange object jumping in the eyes of those 3 was placed in the land area of the cavern, that was a ship.

“This is a cruiser?”
“Seem so.”

Very different from the traditional fishing canoes of Albadanba, that was an engine-powered large yacht. Rubber coating was spread on the cavern floor to avoid damaging the ship’s bottom when landing.

“I don’t understand very well, but the maintenance seems to be done properly.”

“Which means it’s not always left alone here.”

“Besides, the extent of the coating is wide. Perhaps, there are several more cruisers.”

It was as Nekomiya pointed out. Saruwatari and Kagoi pondered.

“Then, the remaining cruisers...”
“It’s only my guess, but this Albadanba itself is a relay point in the traveling route of the *‘blood clan’*. They use cruisers to cross the sea ... aah, look at this.

There's even gasoline as well. No, is this diesel?" [Nekomiya]

Nearby, unopened 18 liters drums were stacking up.

"Can a cruiser travel that far away?"

"Who knows? Won't we know if we ask Harao or Hakoiri? If it's those rich guys, they should have a ship or two."

"However, what's this...?"

Saruwatari crossed his arms and alternately looked at the mountain of drums and the cruiser.

"It's unfair that they can go between the former world and this world."

"That's true."

Nekomiya as well, was first amazed, before feeling bitter.

They had confiscated a lots of '*tools of the former world*' from the old castle that the Knight and the Bishop had been using as a base. The game console, television and the power generator were the main items, but the large amount of cookwares had really pleased Sugiura, they even found weekly magazines that were released just recently — — — that is to say, after they were transferred to this world over here, it really surprised everyone.

The blood clan could frequently and readily move between worlds. Even if that itself was good news, Nekomiya and the others couldn't '*simply return to the former world*' anyway. They had to return to their original form before going back to the former world, so to speak, that was also '*unfair*'.

"Well, I want to get this diesel. There may be some uses for it."

"What we're doing is perfectly robbery, isn't it?"

It when they were having that kind of tepid conversation. Saruwatari suddenly raised his face.

"The wind is calling..."

"What ... Hiee—!?"

Embracing Nekomiya, Saruwatari hopped. Immediately after that, a black bullet-like something exploded on the cavern floor.

"Uhyaa', what is this!?"

"It's Enemy!"

“I already know that! Saruwatari! FYI, that’s my butt!”

“It just becomes this way when people hold cats!”

“I’m a cat but also a girl, okay?!”

“You two, please be serious...!”

The sullen type gargoyle, Kagoi muffled his voice while glancing at the state of those two.

Their exchange was quite lacking in tension but it was a true that enemy was attacking. The three people turned their gaze at the same direction. From outside the cavern, one shadow vigorously jumped in, looking at that, Kagoi first came forward. Using the gargoyle body which was excellent in its defense ability, he directly caught the bullet like something.

However,

“Guu—...”

The impact was enough to make even that Kagoi to unintentionally spilled anguished voice. On top of that, the attacker raised his fist overhead and knocked down Kagoi from the front.

“Blood clan...! A Pawn!?”

Nekomiya raised her voice. A red eyed man cladded in a black armor. It was unmistakably a vampire.

She had thought all 5 Pawns was heading toward the heavy cruiser, so she didn’t take in account that they would encounter one of those here. *This is bad*, she thought, but she instantly confirmed that a big hole was opened in his chest. That vampire was wounded.

He was a little obese middle-aged man. It was an individual with quite a lackluster appearance, but he had a familiar face. However, instead of chasing after the thread of memory, Nekomiya first thought about how to handle this situation. Saruwatari took out a long metal pole and readied it like a bat.

“Move!!”

The blood clan man shouted.

“If you move aside here, I’ll overlook you! Now, move!!”

“.....”

Nekomiya was thinking. Suppose the opponent was unhurt, or he said that without raising his voice at all, then Nekomiya might have obediently retreated. Because it was out of the question to fight against a Pawn head-on and helplessly got themselves killed or kidnapped.

But this situation was different.

The Pawn in front of her was wounded. And he was clearly impatient about something.

Thinking about how he had expressly entered this cavern from the seaside entrance, this Pawn's aim was unmistakably the cruiser. And with him being this impatient, the Pawn shouldn't have that much leisurely time to remove Nekomiya group with brute force.

However wounded he was, he could still easily knock down Kagoi like just now, if looking at that ability, then combat ability-wise, the advantage tilted toward the opponent. Even so, the Pawn was reluctant to spend time and effort on fighting. He wanted to quickly use the cruiser to get away. Because he would suffer a fatal disadvantage unless he escaped.

In that case, what we should do is,

“Saruwatari!”

“I've been bored to tears!”

Buon, swinging his pole, Saruwatari sprung at the Pawn.

“Shit...!”

The Pawn swung his fist to bash Saruwatari, but Kagoi cut in between.

The fist cladded in black armor hit Kagoi's skin — which was made of mineral, but far from piercing, it couldn't even made a crack. In that gap, the pole Saruwatari swung down smashed into the Pawn's face.

“«*Shadow Square*»!!”

Nekomiya clipped off her own shadow, made it to blade-shape and shoot it.

“Roaring youth magic ball!”

During the long airborne time, Saruwatari gathered wind and made a ball.

“Brass Blaster!!”

But the Pawn thrust Kagoi await with sheer strength and erased both the shadow blade and the wind bullet with his right arm gauntlet. The power of that armor was terrifying. Nekomiya ground her teeth. Presently, there wasn't a single information about magic attack that could penetrate that. Its physical defense was also considerable, but there was a report stating that Pressurized Stream Cross had succeeded in punching through its defense.

Still, even magic attacks could probably gain some time. It was at that time when Nekomiya was about to start chanting for the 2nd attack.

“Found you!!”

Raising splashes of water, a different shadow jumped out from the sea.

“—ah...!”

The black energy the *'King'* released caught Sakuma. Burning pain ran around her body, she was thrown out to the lush ground. The *'King'* gazed at Harui who was crucified to the crest and Sakuma who prostrated on the ground, he snorted.

Akai's body started dragging itself inside the forest. She had already reached a power exhausted state that even the *'King'*'s remote control couldn't deceive it anymore.

If they chase, they would be able to caught up.

They couldn't afford to collapse in this place.

Sakuma gripped the grassed, while crawling on the ground, she somehow stood up.

The one who was struggling to start moving wasn't Sakuma alone.

“Damn ... it...!”

While grinding her teeth, Harui was also trying to peel herself off the crest she was crucified to.

Quite a lot of time had already passed. Uozumi and the others might have succeeded in destroying the ship. There might be no need to stop the *'King'* anymore. But still, Sakuma didn't want to sleep here. Even Harui should feel the

same.

They didn't want Akai Asuka, their important friend, to be manipulated any minute any second longer.

"U, raa—...!"

Finally, Harui succeeded in tearing off the crest restraint using brute strength. Immediately, she fluttered her wings once, causing a whirlwind.

"Asuka..., my bad—...!"

An apology to her friend's body. Simultaneously, the whirlwind shredded the branches growing densely in the forest and was on its way toward the '*King*'. The '*King*', without turning around, only pushed out his right arm and crushed that whirlwind.

Akai Asuka's vacant face turned around.

"I didn't think you can still move."

In that voice, something which resembled anger that was seen until a while ago had completely disappeared.

"Why can you wring out that much power?"

"It's decided because Asuka is our friends!"

Baring her teeth, Harui threatened him, the '*King*', on the other hand, showed scorn for that.

"At least, there wasn't a child like you among the children that came up in her story though."

Harui's expression froze, as if to say she didn't want to hear it.

"Asuka is the Queen. That status is promised by birth. She also has the talent to charm people, making them serve her. The one who think you're friends is only you."

"Harui-san, don't listen to him!"

Sakuma shouted.

Akai's body was nearing its limit. The '*King*' intended to neutralize Harui without using a vampire power. He was trying to dampen the source of the

power she mustered by shaking its precondition. Was it a fact that Harui herself was also aware of somewhere in her heart? She bit her lips, her eyes opened wide.

“Certainly, that Sachi over there may be her friend. Because Asuka herself has said so. But you are different. So to call it, you’re a moth gathers to the torch light. You’ll never become equal *‘friends’* with Asuka.”

Harui could just turn a deaf ear to his words. But the girls couldn’t cleanly decided to resort to pure violence without listening to the opponent’s words. With the truth she wanted to avert her eyes from thrusting before her, Harui’s body trembled slightly.

“Harui-sa...”

“noying...”

Growling voice from the bottom of the earth spilled from Harui.

Was that directed toward Sakuma or else toward the *‘King’*? Fury bled from Harui voice into the surroundings, the air started clattering. Trees started creaking, leaves started rustling.

“Like I care what that guy wants to say...! Asuka is my friend...!”

A pained voice leaked out, even so, Harui Yuka clearly announced.

Perhaps, the *‘King’*’s words were objectively correct. Harui Yuka and Hebetsuka Ranmia were always recognized as Akai Asuka’s followers. Followers, after all, were followers. They would never became existences of the same status as the Queen, everyone in the class was also unconsciously viewing Harui and Hebetsuka as under Akai.

“Don’t you understand? I said it didn’t I? Asuka...”

“The like of you!”

Not letting the *‘King’* finish speaking, Harui shouted again. Wind was increasing its momentum.

“The like of you, don’t call Asuka’s name so familiarly!!”

“What...?”

“Asuka is my friend. I didn’t became friends with her because I’m in want of

friendship or anything. Even self-righteous, I won't hand that girl over to you!!"

Trees making rustling noises, were eloquently spoke for Harui Yuka's uncontainable mental state. Harui tread one step, two steps forward, her voice further roughened.

"Asuka! Oi, are you listening Asuka!? I'm not giving up! Even if Asuka says Sakuma, Kaoruko and Utsurogi are more reliable, I and Hebetsuka are always your friends!!"

"What grating noise!!"

"Asuka!!"

Harui shouted.

"Asuka-chan!!"

Sakuma also shouted.

Thereupon, Akai Asuka's body stopped for an instant. Holding her head with one hand, her expression distorted in anguish. That was the face of Akai herself. There was no intervention of that sinister will.

"Harui..., Sachi..."

"Asuka!!"

That slight moment when Akai Asuka's consciousness returned.

Akai sent an entreating gaze toward Sakuma.

Sakuma nodded. If she was to use power, then now and here was the only choice.

The succubus racial ability was «*Temptation*». It suppressed one of the opponent free will and half-forcibly planted goodwill toward themselves. Speaking frankly, it was essentially no difference whatsoever from the remote control the King was doing right now.

Exactly as if it was displayed on a mirror. Sakuma came to understand the terror and the kind of ugliness of that act. Not to mention, to use that on her beloved ones and friends was....

Even so, she had no choice but to do it.

It was the first time she saw that kind of pained face of Akai Asuka. Sakuma

gazed at Akai, she put in power. Akai reached out her hand to Sakuma and Harui like seeking for help. Sakuma responded to that with her hand, Harui with her wings.

«*Temptation*» invoked, Sakuma's heart smoothly entered inside Akai's heart. There was no feeling of rejection. Akai started showing a relieved expression, at that moment.

"Ah..."

Akai's expression changed, Sakuma's heart was thrust away. That power that suddenly came in from the side, had forcibly plundered the control from Sakuma. Anguish passed and again nihility visited. Akai Asuka's heart was recaptured.

"Asuka!"

"It's useless."

The '*King*' muttered in slightly disappointed voice.

"It seems I looked down on your heart a little too much. You taking advantage of a momentary gap to charm her was also unexpected. But apparently, my control power exceeded yours."

Sakuma bit her lips. Was the control right being taken away because she had hesitated? However, for Sakuma who had never used «*Temptation*» before, she didn't know how to adjust it.

Even so, she never thought there was nothing more that could be done. Harui as well would not give up. Sakuma hated to compete, but she had not the slightest bit of intention of losing to Harui in terms of friendship for Akai. Originally, it was doubtful whether the two of them could suppress the '*King*' for 5 minutes. Beyond betting, she had also set up an insurance.

And apparently, that was in time.

"Haaaaaa—! Seiyaaaaaaaaaaa—!!"

Passing through between the trees, a fire-cladding demon dove toward Akai.

"Wha(t)...!!"

Akai's body barely avoided a direct hit, but a sharp blow grazed her shoulder.

Landed, brimming with a will to fight, the demon took a Jeet Kune Do stance.

That demon said:

“You’re not hurt? Sakuma, Harui.”

“Utsurogi-kun! Hino-kun!”

“I’m here too, yo—!”

Blue transparent flesh sticking to the demon’s right arm was waving its hand.

Chapter 64 — Royal Temptation

When Kyouzuke noticed that signal, they were running to the anchor place of the heavy cruiser branch school.

They who knocked down the vampire Toki at his residence on the south side of the island, were informed by Inugami that 5 vampires were heading to the heavy cruiser branch school. The branch school's defense had Kaoruko and Harao, to further prepare for attack, Goubayashi and Sakuma should be heading there as well, but it was beyond their expectation that their number was 5. If there were Knights or Bishops mixed in there, the situation could be said to be the worst. They had to hurry.

At that time, the signal went up.

A black flame was launched high up in the air and exploded. That was «*Evil Flare*». It was categorized as magic called chaos magic or darkness magic, in the class, only Sakuma Sachiko and Okama Kaoru could use it. This magic was lost among the humans and elves, only those related to the *Magic King* could use it.

It seemed that the appearance of monsters related to the Magic King was almost never confirmed on the continent. Even incubus and succubus were rare species. It was difficult to imagine that the relevant species was living on this island country.

«Hey..., that's Saa-chan or Kaoruko-chan, isn't it?»

Rin who was in a combined state with Kyouzuke muttered so. Kyouzuke also stopped his feet, he nodded.

“Both of them are supposed to be at the branch school. Yet magic was shot toward the sky over there, which means...”

“A signal flare. Apparently, the situation is getting quite troublesome.”

Akira's voice was calm. Was that a rescue signal or something else different? Because they had expressly shot it to the sky, the aim was to notifying the location. Kyouzuke turned his gaze as well as his body over there.

“Are we going? Kyouzuke.”

“Right, I’m worried about the branch school as well but yeah.”

At the point that Sakuma who was supposed to be at the branch school shot a signal over there, the situation could no longer be resolved simply by going to the branch school.

“We don’t know if something has happened.”

“Even so, that’s not a reason not to go either.”

Akira’s words were cool as usual.

However, Kyouzuke felt nostalgic to have this exchange with him.

“Well, it’s fine. It’s fine but you know. If we’re going anyway, it’ll be faster to fly. Kyouzuke, Himemizu, please cancel *Extreme*.”

«Nn, very well.»

Rin readily said, Kyouzuke’s figure was wrapped up in light. For just a moment, the surroundings got dazzling, when light settled, there was the appearance of a skeleton clad in slime flesh, the usual Kyouzuke and Rin. Rin lively gathered her body and concentrated to the right side of Kyouzuke’s body. Kyouzuke’s right arm got excessively heavy.

“Hino-kun, is this okay? I can still pack a little more?”

“Is my body a train seat or something?”

“It’s the best transportation system for me so you’re not wrong.... Ah, ouch ouch ouch! Don’t pinch me!”

It was a mystery whether her sense of pain worked when being pinched, but Rin twisted her body and screamed.

“I have no particular problem. Kyouzuke, are you cool with the weight balance?”

So said Akira while surrounding flame on Kyouzuke’s body, having come this far, he too, was accustomed to combining. Rin made an «ouch ouch» voice and evacuated further to the end.

“Nn.... The right arm is heavy but don’t worry too much. I think we can probably fly.”

“All right, let’s go then.”

“That’s fine and all but ... Akira,”

Kyousuke sensed something different from Akira's usual attitude. Being cold was the usual, but he couldn't sense much heat value in the conversation.

"You really don't try to stop me too much. Usually you'd say *It's dangerous*, or something."

"It's dangerous, I still think that even now, but you know."

As if he had already predicted those words of Kyousuke, Akira answered.

"Simply put, I can't find as much as advantage as before to keep you away from danger. Because other classmates are also fighting, it's no use even if I forcibly peel you off the fight. Besides."

"Besides?"

"...No, it's nothing."

For Akira who always spoke clearly about any and everything, he was unusually evasive.

The act of hesitating to speak itself stems from fear of something. Those were the words of Akira himself.

"Anyway, let's hurry. Fly, Kyousuke."

"Right, I don't know whether it was Sakuma or Kaoruko, but we should hurry."

Thinking deeply was left for later. Right now, he had to cope with the impending crisis first.

Kyousuke spread wings of flames and soared to the sky.

And then, several minutes later.

In front of Sakuma Sachiko descended Utsurogi Kyousuke, clad in flames. By combining with Hino Akira, he was in «*Blaze Cross*» state. There was Himemizu Rin attached to his right arm as well, so «*Trinity Cross*»? Because it wasn't the perfect condition, it wasn't «*Trinity Full Cross*».

"Utsurogi-kun, Asuka-chan is...!"

"Ahh, I roughly understand.... That guy is the King...!?"

Kyousuke planted his feet in an L-shape, one foot stepped forward, the other behind, his right fist situated in front of his belly, his right hand was put before his chin in an unclenched form.

Battle readied, Jeet Kune Do stance completed.

As she thought, Kyouzuke had come. At the same time as relief, Sakuma felt an uplifting emotion. Was this what they called heart-throbbing? It doesn't mean that he came to help specifically because Sakuma was here. Even if any other classmate was to similarly shoot a signal to the air, he would come running in the same way.

But still, it was unchanged that he had come running to her predicament. Not just herself. There were Harui and Akai as well. Anyway, he had arrived in their crisis. That fact made her feel a little too happy.

Harui was sending an amazed gaze toward her, so Sakuma suddenly got embarrassed and drew back her body.

"I see, you're the students in the report."

Said the 'King' who had hijacked Akai Asuka's body.

"It seems you're the only one who reached Phase 3 in the class."

It seemed that report had already arrived at the King's place. Probably by Bishop Akeno. Kyouzuke didn't answer, he was glaring at the 'King' while keeping his stance.

"But you must have used Asuka's blood to reach Phase 3. You have come here after much trouble, but you should step back here for your own good, no?"

The meaning of his words, Sakuma understood it a few beats later. The students of 2nd year class 4 could invoke Phase 3 ability by the activation of vampire factors, but on the other hand, they needed to receive blood from Akai. And then, the bearer of that factor would carry the shackles that they could never go against the original.

There was an irresistible reason why Kyouzuke had obtained Akai's blood. But as a result, it brought about the situation where «*Kyouzuke couldn't resist if Akai was to give him an order*».

Akai now had her body hijacked by the King.

To speak further, it should be possible for the 'King' himself, who was the commander-in-chief of the vampire factors Akai had, to take over Kyouzuke's body and move it.

Kyousuke confronted Akai who was taken over by that '*King*', but could he really go against him?

"That's a bluff."

Clearly spoke Akira.

"You are only remote-controlling Akai's body. It doesn't mean you're manipulating even Akai's will itself. There's no way you can give '*order*' to Kyousuke via Akai."

"....."

"And right here right now, you cannot use your power as the King of the blood clan to make Kyousuke submit either. If that is possible, you would've use the assassin Pawns you sent in as the relay points to make Akai obey, there were many chances to do that before this. Isn't that right?"

Akai Asuka's expression remained empty. Sakuma couldn't perceive what the '*King*' was thinking when he was listening to Akira's words. But that silent attitude of his was exactly telling the correct answer.

Without canceling his stance, Kyousuke slowly approached. As if to indicate his fighting spirit itself, the flames wrapping his body were flaring up.

"I'll have you return Akai's body."

"....."

Akai's body being dominated by the '*King*' had signs of moving. Blood claws extended from the tip of her fingers which was in spear hand form. But the '*King*' showed no sign of coming to fight right away and seemed to be looking for a chance to leave this place. The '*King*' who took over Akai's body had a time limit. Unless the Pawn who had fled with Akai's blood was to deliver that blood to the '*King*''s true body, his plan couldn't be accomplished.

Kaoruko and the others had gone ahead to destroy their ship. To prevent that, the '*King*' wanted to leave this place.

Perhaps, Kyousuke group couldn't grasp that far. They didn't know the exact status Akai was currently in. However, if Kyousuke was to pin down Akai, they might be able to skillfully wait for time-out.

"Haah!"

Kyousuke vigorously approached, a flame-cladded fist thrust out.

But Akai's body gently averted her upper body, it caught his fist with one hand. The unpleasant smell of burning flesh seeped inside the forest.

"I told you. You should have stepped back for your own good...!"

Faint irritation concealed in the voice spilled from Akai's throat. Her skirt bounced, the slender leg kicked toward Kyousuke's abdomen. The leather shoe broke through the flame body and struck his spine. Utsurogi Kyousuke was lightly blown away.

"Kuh...!"

The bone body slammed against a tree trunk, sparks scattered. Fire spread to grasses, grasses were smothered and digested by Rin who stretched out from the right arm.

"Hino-kun, substitute with me!"

"...I understand!"

Hino Akira's fire power was difficult to use in this cramped forest. Akira separated from Kyousuke's body, his body was covered again by Rin's slime body. Using one arm to erase the tornado that had arise surrounding his body, *Extreme Cross* emerged from inside.

Kyousuke sprung at the '*King*' again and swung his fist. But as expected, Akai's body caught that and sent its spear hand to his face. **Pashaan**, sound of water bursting open echoed. Kyousuke whose neck had disappeared temporarily, pushed the '*King*'s body against a tree trunk and immobilized it.

Akai Asuka who was pressed against a wall, still had a vacant face without a single atom of emotion.

Even with Kyousuke's power, it still couldn't surpass the physical ability Akai Asuka had. The '*King*' was only manipulating Akai's body like a doll. Naturally, if the '*King*' himself willed it, he could make her push herself as much as he wanted.

"Guh..."

A voice of anguish leaked from Kyousuke's mouth. There were sounds of

bones creaking.

The origin of that sound was none other than Akai's arm. Muscles were pressuring bones, Akai Asuka's entire body started screaming. At this rate, her body was going to break first.

Moreover, changes were also happening to Kyousuke side. Including clothes, the surface part that was keeping up an outward appearance similar to human, had started melting and dripping down. The melted and dropped parts were changing to the same color as Himemizu Rin's slime body.

With the factors returning to ground states, his Phase 3 ability was approaching its activity limit. He probably had already finished a battle in *Extreme Cross* once.

As expected, this situation couldn't hold for long like this.

"Hino-kun!"

Sakuma called the floating wisp.

"Sakuma, Harui, tell me the situation."

Unusually for Akira, he had asked so from his side.

"Anyway, Asuka is taken over by that guy. And then, I don't understand well, but she returned to normal for a moment..."

"Return...?"

"Ah, yup. Umm, with my power..."

A little reserved, Sakuma raised her hand. It was because she thought that using «*Temptation*» on her friends was, as expected, not a praiseworthy act regardless of the circumstances. In fact, its effectiveness was too naive and the control was effortlessly stolen back by the 'King'.

Akira glanced at Kyousuke who was desperately pinning down Akai, he said:

"Understood. Let's go with that once more."

"UOOOOOOo—!"

Following after Uozumi Sakeichiro's voice, trident carrying sahagins landed. The fishmen rushed toward the one Pawn.

Nekomiya group was surprised, the fishmen corps took a sidelong glance at

them while making a bundle around the Pawn. When it started to look like a dumpling jostling game, a slightly belated incubus flew into the cavern. He was a handsome man dressed in the usual gaudy bondage fashion, the moment he noticed Nekomiya group, he showed a charming smile and waved his hand.

“Ara, Nekomi, what a coincidence to meet in this kinda place?”

“Coincidence and whatnot is fine, however, Kaoruko,”

Nekomiya, while unintentionally scratching her head, looked at the Pawn.

“What is this?”

“It’s a little troublesome to explain this situation. Ah, by ‘*ship*’, it’s this, isn’t it?”

Saying so, Okama Kaoru turned his gaze toward the one cruiser anchored inside the cavern.

“What do we do about that cruiser?”

“We’ll do this. «*Evil Flare*»!!”

Black flames released from Kaoru’s nails flew toward the cruiser. Nekomiya Miya had no idea what was happening in front of her eyes at all, after absentmindedly watched as the released black flames pierced into the cruiser and gulped it down, she hurriedly pressed him for answers.

“Hey, wait a minute...! What are you doing? It’ll break!?”

“It’ll be bad if we don’t break it. We have to definitely seal that Pawn’s means of escape.”

“It’ll be bad if he escape?”

“At present stage, really bad.”

As Kaoru muttered so, his face looking from the side was seriousness itself. At least, he wasn’t the kind of man who would take actions of this degree with only guesswork or nonsense. Nekomiya started thinking so despite not quite convinced, Kaoruko then roughly explained the situation to her.

“He’s trying to make off with Asuka’s blood.”

Akai Asuka’s blood contained vampire factors. She felt the details were omitted quite a lot, but anyway, if those factors was to reach them vampires’ ‘*King*’, Akai would be unable to escape from the ‘*King*’s domination wherever she was.

“...Akai is also afflicted with quite a lot of hardship, isn’t she?”

The sullen-type gargoyle, Kagoi muttered to himself.

“Rescuing friends from a dilemma is a part of youth.”

The hot-blooded baseball idiot hanuman, Saruwatari nodded while playing with wind balls.

“For now, let’s quickly destroy it while Uozumi and the others are holding him down!”

“Ahh, understood.”

As before, a square-shaped blade by shadow magic floated on Nekomiya’s one hand.

“Even though it’s such an expensive cruiser.”

Not completely satisfied, Kagoi grumbled.

“Don’t be so stingy, destroy it! Let’s go! «*Evil Flare*»!”

“«*Shadow Square*»!”

“Brass blaster!”

“Oh! U–UOOOo!!”

While everyone continuously launched magic, Kagoi who couldn’t use magic, threw a boulder rolling in a corner of the cavern.

Regardless of how high class a cruiser it was, it was, after all, a civilian cruiser. There was no reason it could maintain its form after being exposed to many magic attacks. In a blink of an eye, it blew up black smoke and became useless.

“Guaaaa— — — —!!”

Exactly at that time, the Pawn who was being jostle about, finally managed to sent the swarming fishmen flying. It was a middle aged vampire with a big hole opened in his belly and an obese body that didn’t look too agile, even so, he still seemed to have enough power to not let the riffraff sahagins get close. Even Uozumi Sakeichiro the gillman who attacked in the vanguard, was now rolling on the floor. The Pawn was glaring at Nekomiya and the others with his shining red eyes. His face felt somewhat familiar, but there wasn’t enough time to recalled that.

The Pawn looked that the smoking cruiser, his shoulders perked up, his voice roughened.

“Kuh, you, you bastards...!!”

Nekomiya, Kaoruko and the others took a stance at once. They were in a state to intercept attacks at anytime. The opponent Pawn was wounded. If they fought back at full force, it might not be an opponent they couldn't win against. Nekomiya cautiously watched for the opponent's attitude.

However, the action that Pawn took next, was to escape. He spread his wings and flew outside the cavern. Nekomiya and the others who thought that he would come at them, was late to respond.

“Not good!”

Kaoruko shouted.

“That guy still has Asuka's blood!”

Even if they had crushed one of his escape means, they still couldn't feel relieved as the Pawn was escaping with Akai's blood. Certainly, Nekomiya had also sighted a bottle with red liquid strapped to his belt. Because the full body armor matched his physique, there should be no places to hide. But the Pawn's escape speed was fast beyond expectation. Would they be able to catch up? Right at the moment she thought so, a shadow jumped out from the sea surface along with splashing sound.

“TEYAAAAAAa—!!”

That was the only non-combatant girl in this place, Sugiura Aya, in charged of the class' cooking.

Sugiura hit the sea surface with her tentacles, in one hand held an object resembled a wooden sword that who knew when and where she acquired it. That wooden sword was thrust out in a straight line, the Pawn twisted his body to dodge it, but the sword grazed his waist, cutting straight at the bottle.

“UOo—!?”

Nekomiya unintentionally stooped forward. Did the Pawn not notice the bottle was broken? He immediately flew straight outside the cavern. Sugiura dropped back down the sea, creating a mighty splash.

“She, she did it!?”

Kagoi said something unnecessary. But at this point in time, that wasn't mistaken. They did it.

“Not bad at all, Aya! Fine play!”

“Eh? Ahh, I did it well?”

Splash splash, pushing her way through the water, Sugiura swam. Saruwatari also spread both arms and praised her.

“That carefully aimed attack, what splendid control!”

“Eh, ahh, no.... It's a coincidence...”

“Exactly as if you can hear the voice of that wooden sword!”

“It's a coincidence, coincidence. Ahaha...”

Looking at Sugiura who smiled bitterly as if she was hiding some secret, Nekomiya sighed. *So she also came.*

Anyway, the battle at this place had ended. It cost them extra time and effort, but as a result, they were able to crush one of the enemy's escape methods, even in the unlikely event that he somehow acquired a mean to escape this island, they had already succeeded in destroying the bottle containing Akai's blood.

Did Kyouzuke group really reach the branch school?

Thinking that far, Nekomiya suddenly looked up.

“Speaking of which, Kaoruko, weren't you in charge of the branch school's defense?”

“Ah, that's also troublesome to start talking...”

While rolling his bang with his index finger, Kaoruko grumbled.

Apparently, at a place they didn't know of, the situation had changed considerably.

“At time like this, tools like mobile phones are really convenient, don't you think so?”

“I do. Was it telepathy magic? That seems to exist in this world, it may be better to study it.”

Ah, study, that's a little unpleasant. Thought Nekomiya who still couldn't escape from her student thinking even when 2 months had passed since she became a monster.

“.....!”

Kyousuke was firmly pinning down Akai's body from the front. Akai Asuka's body that was trying to cope with that with only brute strength without showing any emotion, was ominous. And in spite of being in a bad condition, Akai's body itself, which was being manipulated by the '*King*', could perfectly rival Kyousuke's in Extreme Cross state.

That was a glimpse of the power the '*Queen*' Akai Asuka had. That made him realize once again the strength and terror of the '*blood clan*' that they would probably challenge after this.

«Kyousuke-kun—...!»

Rin's scream echoed in his head.

«It's, already ... the limit...!»

He knew. He was already reaching the stage where his Phase 3 ability — «*Complete Fusion*» couldn't hold on anymore.

The benefits of Phase 3 was significant. By unifying with Rin up to the spiritual level, the ability Kyousuke had — «*Characteristics Amplification*», was effective on Kyousuke himself as well. His physical ability significantly increased. Coupled with the effect of Extreme Cross which allow him to liquefy his body, he could show matchless power in physical combat.

Or so it was supposed to be. But even that Extreme Cross didn't reach up to Queen Akai Asuka. If he was to reach the limit, it was clear as day that he would be pushed back.

“Shit—, Akai! Can't you hear me!? Akai!”

While listening to the sound of Rin's muddy body melting, and dropping down, Kyousuke desperately shouted. However, that showed no sign of getting through to Akai.

“It's useless...!”

He could hear the 'King's' voice full of irritation. His arms were making creaking sound, and were being forced open. Even so, Kyouzuke and Rin weren't discouraged, they shouted back in a loud voice.

"Whether or not it's useless, is not for you to decide...—!"
«You don't know unless you try!»
"Enough of your trite words!"

The power balance crumbled, or so they thought, but Kyouzuke purposely relaxed the strength in his arms.

".....—!"

Simultaneously, he liquefied his arms, taking away all the targets Akai's brute strength was directed to. Too much momentum, Akai Asuka's body pitched forward and jumped into Kyouzuke's chest. Choosing that moment, Kyouzuke's body further liquefied.

Bashan, along with splashing sound, Kyouzuke's semi-liquefied body wrapped up Akai's body. He felt a big foreign object entering himself. As expected, it wasn't the feeling of hugging that dainty body. Kyouzuke's body had completely changed to a slime-state, he increased its density in order to stop Akai's body in place.

«Handy, you're handy.»
"Don't make fun of me! Give me a hand, Rin!"
«I'm already giving you a hand»

Kyouzuke's body had become a human slime standing up right. Akai Asuka's body was being restrained in its stomach. The 'King' desperately struggled and was trying to somehow free himself from Kyouzuke's body. No, he was already getting free. Even if Kyouzuke had semi-liquefied his entire body, it wasn't enough to stop Akai Asuka's body.

"Asuka!"

There was Harui's voice from behind.

"Asuka, can you hear me!? Once more, please come out once more!"
"Impertinent little tricks...!"

Spilling a resentful voice, Akai's body crawled out from Kyouusuke. But that body didn't completely regain its freedom, this time, Rin was holding out. Kyouusuke's body and Rin's body were already in the process of separating, even so, Rin used her entire body's viscosity to stop the '*King*' as he tried to crawl out.

Kyouusuke also extended his arms and pinned down Akai's shoulders with both hands.

«Ah, we ... are in an *amazing* posture right now...!?»

"Right, we are! This is for Akai's sake!"

Probably, they had become a considerably queer shape. Thereupon, Harui shouted again.

"Asuka!"

"Akai!"

Kyouusuke also roughened his voice.

It was just yesterday that he caught sight of Harui and Hebetsuka in the heavy cruiser branch school. They had been irritated by Akai's cold attitude. Harui Yuka wanted to save Akai Asuka, there was no falsehood in that feeling. Because for Harui at least, their relationship was that of '*friends*'. For example, even if Akai didn't think so, Harui still seriously thought of Akai as her friend. Kyouusuke understood that feeling a little. Whatever the circumstances, whatever the other party was thinking, she had friends she wanted to save, that was the same as Kyouusuke.

"There's nothing more grating than this voice..."

"You butt out!"

Kyouusuke pinned the head of the '*King*' who muttered unpleasantly.

"Akai! Do you remember that time with Harui and Hebetsuka at the branch school!? Weren't you shock? Being told such a thing by Harui? I understand!"

That was a lie. Kyouusuke didn't understand people's heart. It wasn't something that could be changed so easily.

But it didn't seem to be a random speech. At that time, Harui had said this: «*Aren't we friends?*».

In response to that, Akai's expression had been full of surprise. Even the cool-headed ruthless Queen was never a doll without any emotions. If it was things of that degree, even Kyouzuke could understand plenty enough.

"Asuka!"

As if to respond to Harui's many shouts, Akai's body twitched. The frantic resistance inside Kyouzuke's body weakened for an instance.

"Now, Sakuma!"

"Yup!"

In response to Akira's signal, Sakuma closed her eyes and stretched out one arm. Thereafter, her eyes opened, and Kyouzuke almost looked straight at them.

Almost, that was because Rin had forcibly shifted Kyouzuke's gaze at the last moment. Just by barely grazed her gaze, a floating sensation welled up in his heart, simultaneously, he felt Sakuma's smile excessively flashed back in his mind. Somehow started feeling apologetic to Rin, Kyouzuke shook his head left and right.

*Ah, so this is «**Temptation**».*

He had a slightly idiotic impression.

That's right, this was the true power Sakuma Sachiko had as a succubus. She was using that power against her friend. Not that Kyouzuke didn't have enough insight to question its right and wrong. Most of all, even just looking at Sakuma's pained look, it was clear that she didn't think well of this situation. But this was already the only means to stop Akai's body that had been taken over by the 'King'. Even Extreme Cross couldn't completely restrain her.

"Asuka—chan—...!"

Sakuma shouted in a little voice.

"You think you can suppress me with this degree of power...!"

"You're tenacious...!"

Even so, the 'King' wasn't going to lose either. Against the domination that had cut in by taking advantage of a momentary opening, the 'King's will was

rivaling it.

With Akai Asuka's heart as the battlefield, the pair conflicted. But antagonism anymore than this might very well leave a bad influence on her heart.

“Rin! Separate!”

«Ai yo—!»

Kyousuke and Rin canceled Extreme Cross. Rin returned to slime state and worked to restrain Akai Asuka's body, Utsurogi Kyousuke jumped out from inside Rin.

“Sakuma! I'll lend you my power!”

“.....!”

Sakuma's shoulders twitched, but she didn't give any reply. Kyousuke went around next to Sakuma, he softly put his hand on her shoulder.

It was the gist of Big Burst. Kyousuke's skeleton fingers slightly dug into Sakuma's white, soft shoulder. By his Phase 2 ability «*Characteristics Amplification*», Sakuma Sachiko's every abilities were rapidly rising.

“Guu—...!”

That voice that leaked out from Akai Asuka's vocal cord, was the ‘King’s’ pained scream.

“From Asuka-chan's body...!”

The energy flickering from Sakuma's body, greatly shook trees and grasses in the surroundings.

What kind of ability «*Temptation*» really was? Kyousuke still couldn't understand well. In the case this time, did it influence Akai Asuka's body or her soul that was sleeping there? Or perhaps it caused an effect to the ‘King’ that was manipulating Akai's body from somewhere far away? Even that was unknown.

But at this point time, the eyes of everyone in that place were completely stolen by Sakuma Sachiko. Harui, Akira, Rin, as well as Kyousuke. Even for an instant, they couldn't avert their eyes from her as she spread her feet, stood firmly on the ground and raised her right arm together with a strong will.

To make one last push to that power which was amplified by Kyousuke,

Sakuma powerfully shouted:

“Get out–tt!!”

Chapter 65 — From the Throne

“Did, did we ... win?”

Looking at Akai Asuka dejected drooped her head, Sakuma Sachiko timidly asked.

Obtaining Kyousuke’s power of «*Characteristics Amplification*», Sakuma’s «*Temptation*» had finally destroy the ‘King’*s* domination. For a short while, he continued to try to creep back in Akai’s consciousness somehow, but at the end of a few minutes of silent battle, even that had finally ceased.

He ran out of time. All the Pawn’s factors that the King could trace, had probably been annihilated inside Akai. Akai Asuka had finally been released from the ‘King’*s* repulsive domination.

Akai who fainted was caught inside Rin’s usual slime body. However, she slowly, gently handed Akai over to Sakuma. Sakuma silently accepted Akai.

“Asuka-chan...”

Sakuma quietly called her name, Harui also peer in from the side.

“Asuka...”

Having her name called by those two, Akai stirred slightly, opened her eyes slightly.

At this time, Sakuma suddenly noticed an embarrassing fact. All this while, she had continued to apply «*Temptation*» on Akai. She had meant to limit her power as much as possible, but in the end, she was forced to use all her power to push aside the ‘King’*s* domination.

Akai Asuka hated being forced anything by anyone. At the point that Sakuma had trampled on her free will, perhaps, Sakuma wasn’t that much different from that ‘King’, was she?

Suppose that «*Temptation*» was powerful enough to make Akai forget such a thing, what would she do then?

For example, if that grown-up and cool Akai — that Akai who she was friends with since childhood, was to approach her while blushing slightly? As Akai’s best

friend, she didn't know how to cope with that at all. The one who used «*Temptation*» was herself, so should she take *responsibility*?

Sakuma's thinking process started spinning around and around that one thing.

"Asuka, you okay? Can you get up?"

Harui Yuka asked in slightly gentle tone that was completely different from so far.

"Nn.... I'm okay..."

Akai finally responded to that.

"Really? You're not falling in love with Sakuma or anything?"

"Ha, Harui-san?"

Harui's too frank manner of speaking made Sakuma falter.

Now, what would she do if Akai was to say «*In fact, I do*».

«*I'm already in love in the first place*» was also troubling.

It's not troublesome but troubling.

Akai slowly opened her eyes, she had a blank look for a little while, but as she finally understood, she muttered «*Ahh*». And then, the shocking ... well, it was enough to call it shocking, but she said a fact that was surprising in its own way for Sakuma.

"There's no way «*Temptation*» has that kind of power. At best, it can only make people conscious of you."

"Ehh, ah, is, is that so?"

"That's right. Well, it'll make people stupefied for a little while, but it won't last you know..."

Speaking of which, she felt that Kaoru had also mentioned that the effective time wasn't that long.

Sakuma suddenly got ashamed of herself who was thinking about some kind of outrageous thing about «*Temptation*». Behind her, Utsurogi Kyousuke crossed his arms, and was grumbling.

"But you know, this time, I didn't have any good part..."

“What this? Kyousuke, has you finally learned to worry about your screen time?”

“This is a good trend—, Kyousuke-kun. Well, let’s yield (the credit) to Saa-chan this time.”

By his side, Hino Akira and Himemizu Rin were teasingly poking him.

No, however, regardless of how much its effective time was short, or its influence was not great, as expected, she wasn’t going to use it on Kyousuke. Naturally, not just Kyousuke. Making sure not to use it on any of her classmates, she was going to firmly seal the power of «*Temptation*». As expected, she couldn’t become unrestrained about this ability like Kaoru.

“By the way, Akai.”

Kyousuke called out to Akai who were limply in Sakuma’s arms.

“How’s your body? It seems he also wasted lots of your factors.”

“Honestly, I’m quite tired...”

Answered the Queen in the usual low-tension.

“I feel like I won’t last another day...”

“Understood. We’ll go ask Ryuzaki.”

Saying so, Kyousuke exchanged looks with Rin and Akira. Rin hopped and fused with Kyousuke, lining up with Akira, they started running deeper into the forest. Hidden between the trees, they soon disappeared.

Akai muttered:

“Are they being tactful...”

“To whom!”

Harui calmly retorted.

Akai Asuka raised her face and look at that Harui. Stared by those handsome almond eyes, Harui Yuka the harpy somewhat awkwardly averted her eyes.

“Errr, Harui. You know.”

“What?”

Coldly turning away, Harui curtly said.

Akai didn't have a frank personality, but Harui was much the same. Just a little bit, Sakuma smiled bitterly.

"For me, both Harui, and Hebetsuka, um.... Are friends."
"...Ou."

At Akai's words, Harui was going scratch her nose. But naturally, she had become armless bird-winged, so it ended with only feathers brushing her nose. As it were, Harui unintentionally sneezed.

"(It's case closed with this ... isn't it?)"

Looking at the exchange of the not-being-honest two, Sakuma showed a bitter smile.

There were still parts that was difficult to say case-closed here. But the battle had finished. They had overcome that ridge. Now, she wanted to feel relieved about her best friend's safety for a bit, and give a little help to reconciling those not-being-honest friends.

"Friends ... is good."

While making his way through the thickets, Kyouzuke said so. Akira gave a startled voice.

"What's so suddenly? Kyouzuke.... Certainly, I also think friendship is wonderful though."

"There's no deep meanings, but you know. Hey, Rin.... Friendship is good, isn't it?"

"Ehh, you turn the topic to me there!? What kind of answer do you want!?"

The reason he left that place was naturally because he worried about Akai and Harui. He knew about Harui's complicated friendship toward Akai, so he thought Akai should also had things to convey to Harui about that. It would be difficult to talk if themselves were at that place, thinking so, Kyouzuke chose to leave.

From Utsurogi Kyouzuke who was clueless about human's heart, to Utsurogi Kyouzuke who wasn't.

Even Kyouzuke was trying to grow in his own way.

“Yup yup, Kyousuke-kun is splendid.”

Rin read his thought that was leaking quite a lot due to the combined state.

“I’ll also try my best to reconcile.”

“With Kogane-kun?”

“Yup.”

That might not be as beautiful as Akai and Harui’s friendship, even so, Kyousuke couldn’t hate Kogane. The feelings that Kogane was his friend still remained. There were also words Washio had left as well. It was his goal to reunite with Kogane and reconcile.

“You’re the same as ever...”

Said Akira in a slightly soft tone.

This was quite a big difference if one was to think about how until just a while ago, his attitude was hardened to fiery anger just by mentioning Kogane’s name. Just as Kyousuke was hesitating whether he should retort or not, the forest ended and they came out to the village.

There were already several students gathering there. Apparently, the meeting had also finished, around chieftain Bergel’s house were the chieftains of other islands who were looking at each other with difficult looks.

“Ah, Utsurogi-kun.”

Several members of Inugami Rescue Unit were also here. The one who noticed Kyousuke first and called out to him was Hanazono.

“Hanazono, how was it on Ryuzaki’s side?”

“Unn.... Well, case closed, I wonder?”

When Kyousuke asked, Hanazono made a slightly difficult face and answered.

Ryuzaki should have participated in the discussion in order to gain the trust of this Albadanba citizens, as well as to have them share blood for Akai. That Ryuzaki and the chieftain of this Delf Island, Bergel-shi were nowhere to be found. Because she said *case close*, he probably was able to get a favorable answer.

“As expected, that vampire Toki seems to be a person of this island.”

“.....”

Receiving those words, Kyousuke also didn't know what he should say. Rin also similarly fell silent. After all, the ones who finished off that vampire was none other than Kyousuke and Rin.

“However, that man is a vampire.”

In chilling tone, Akira clearly said. Hanazono also meekly nodded.

“Yup. It seems they have believed that. There isn't any positive proof, but lots of circumstantial evidences come out.”

She was probably talking about the human bones mountain in the aforementioned underground cavern.

Hanazono continued the story. She said, with these evidences, chieftain Bergel and the others had come believed that the man who gave his name as Toki ... Tokihara was a vampire, as well as the existence who tricked the chieftain and snatched away many children's life on this island.

But it was a fact that, a very intimate neighbor was a monstrosity, that the monstrosity had laid its and on many lives, and that he confined Inugami and was defeated by Kyousuke's hand in the end. It was impossible for him to process all of those rationally from the start.

His trust was obtained.

Their suspicion was dispelled.

The trade fair would safely be held, 2nd year class 4 could participate as well. Not to mention, he even properly apologized to 2nd year class 4 who was troubled by Tokihara's action.

But even so, chieftain Bergel would need some time to sort out his feelings, said Hanazono.

“.....”

Finished listening to the story, Kyousuke looked at his own hands.

“...Kyousuke-kun is not bad?”

“In this case, we're forced to do this. Otherwise, the one who died would have been Inugami.”

“...Nn, right.”

Kyousuke quietly nodded to Rin and Akira's words.

But he also thought about the time he killed Suou. He, certainly, had killed a conscious, logical and intelligence human-shaped being. He had killed a human-shaped being who wasn't an absolutely incompatible existence, perhaps, he might even be friends. He knew, if he didn't do that, he himself, or someone important to him would have died, but he killed, killed a human-shaped being who had made many friends in place he didn't know of.

And yet, why was he able to do that so calmly?

He felt that something was a little strange.

But no matter how much he gazed, there was no answer on his fleshless hand.

Gopo. Gopo.

There was a big flask that one human could be put completely inside. The flask was connected to various machines through strange tubes, inside was filled with suspicious liquid. Furthermore, a human corpse floated like being preserved in formalin.

No one would know unless they were told it was a human-shape something. Limbs torn, color came off, it was exactly like a tattered dust cloth. The face's shape could be barely recognized as a young man, but it was hard to say his tissues were being fixed by the liquid, why was this kind of dead body thrown inside this huge flask? Anyone seeing this would have no idea at all.

Gopo. Gopo.

No,

That wasn't something like a corpse.

“The King still doesn't show any sign of waking up...”

A vampire who was wearing a habit, gazed at that flask and narrowed her eyes. In her hands were several documents stapled on top a board. Along with a little grief, she gazed at *‘that’* as it repeated faint breathing, and wrote several numbers in the document.

The name of this woman with visible body line was Akeno Miyabi.

Also known as Bishop Akeno.

And then, the flask put in front of her, the man who was sleeping inside that was certainly the existence called the '*King*' of their blood clan.

Because his appearance was like this now, the '*King*' couldn't talk with his own mouth, neither could he move with his own feet. However, even like this, he was still living. The proof was chained to the bottom of the flask — an unspeaking girl.

She who had a vacant face, was sitting on a small throne put before the flask, her face casted downward like a doll with its strings cut. Like the man inside the flask, it was unclear whether the girl was dead or alive, next instant, her body jumped, her face slowly rose.

"Have you returned? '*King*'."

When Akeno courteously asked, the girl slowly nodded.

However, this girl was in no way the '*King*'. This vacant eyes girl was only an acceptable vessel to move as the mouth of the unspeaking '*King*'. What was the '*King*' was inside the flask. His body was mostly not functioning, only his mind was firmly living.

The '*King*' had been following the blood of the Pawn, and temporarily manipulating the Queen's body. It was a time-limited domination. During that short 30 minutes, the '*King*' planned to use the Queen's body to support the Pawns, and have them bring that Queen's blood back here.

But,

"It failed..."

Such words were spun from the girl's throat.

"Asuka's domination was taken back, and time soon ran out after that. I've been looking down on those guys a little."

"They're the bunch who killed Suou. I guess they're surprisingly capable."

"It seems so."

His voice pretended to be calm, but slight bitterness still showed through. Akeno decided not to touch that and just calmly read through the documents.

“It’s about your body regeneration, but as expected, it takes our all just to maintain the status quo so that the body tissue wouldn’t collapse any further. That’s at present point though.”

“Really. As I thought, it certainly is necessary to invade the country of those humans.”

“I apologize for the inconvenience to the ‘King’.”

“It’s fine.”

The ‘King’ had once suffered a serious injury in the former world and was on the verge of dying. By the hands of the elders who feared the collapse of the clan, he was put into the flask to maintain his mind. Since then, 3 years in the time flow of the world over there had passed, he had been kept away from the eyes of human.

The invasion to this world was a plan made at that time. In the end, they couldn’t found any method to return the ‘King’'s body back to normal in the former world. The blood clan bet on this world where magic technology was much more developed.

But even in this world, they couldn’t find the means to recover the ‘King’'s injury in any of the many magic technologies. Their last ray of hope was placed on the forbidden spells the Central Empire controlled and concealed, or the hidden treasures enshrined in the imperial palace.

If one was to follow the origin which became the impetus for the blood clan to pick a fight with the Empire, it would be this kind of thing.

The ‘King’ was in a state where his body couldn’t move, but he could follow the blood of the blood clan and manipulate them. This vampire girl was currently only an existence for the sake of speaking the ‘King’'s words.

“About that bunch, how would you like to deal with them from now on?”
“Leave them be, I can’t say that in this situation, can I? Especially Asuka needs to be strongly disciplined. But I don’t mind even if you don’t prioritize the other guys that much.”

As expected, the ‘King’ seemed to be obsessed with the Queen.

“Besides, it’ll soon be 3 months since that bunch came over here. I guess it’s about time the ‘Filter’ expire.”

“The fact that the *‘Filter’* expire is not limited to always give a good influence for us.”

“It’ll put a wedge in their unity. If it’s Asuka alone, we can manage her one way or another. That bunch’s unity is troublesome.”

It was a surprisingly honest analysis. Akeno thought that was unexpected.

She wouldn’t deny that she herself also had that part, but the *‘King’* tended to look down, despise others. Even in the case this time as well, saying that was the cause of defeat was mostly not mistaken. It was rare for that *‘King’* to easily recognize the threat of others as *‘troublesome’*.

“Scar Red, are you there?”

“I am.”

Like guided by the voice of the girl, darkness gently warped. Slowly rising inside the dark was a hard-faced giant. It was a tall man wrapped up in a military uniform. As it was for many vampires, the color of his pupils were dyed red.

And then, what most noticeable was as his name implied — a big scar ran on his face.

As a mark of a powerful big wheel even inside the blood clan, Red held the title of *‘Rook’*. He was comparable to the Queen in terms of close-quarters-combat. Red who had many abilities starting from his mobility that could soar freely in the sky, carried an important role when they started the war against the Central Empire.

When the vampires on the frontline was ordered to retreat due to the changes in circumstances, the one who was in charge of the rear was also Red.

Akeno could generally imagine what kind of order the *‘King’* was going to give to that Red.

The girl’s words were leisurely spun. Both Akeno and Red quietly listen to his words and didn’t give any objection. The girl said only that much, and again dejectedly drooped her head.

Now, the *‘King’* was in that flask, there was no changes to his appearance. But the *‘King’* seemed to have decided to rest his eyes and mouth for a moment. He was sleeping. The vampire girl who was made to seat on the throne, had vacant

eyes and languidly left her mouth open.

Red made small bow, and undertook the '*King*'s order.

"....."

He wordlessly turned around, as it were, he briskly walked and was about to leave that hall.

"Are you going already?"

"It's the King's order."

Akeno's question was answered curtly.

Although working enthusiastically was a good thing, she hated that he was a little too blindly devoted.

While observing the flask the '*King*' was in, Akeno added another check mark to the document.

'*Rook*' Scar Red had quietly sortied without being seen off by anyone in particular.

Chapter 66 — Time for Choice

The battle had ended. The damage 2nd year class 4 had suffered could be said to be minimal. Against 5 Pawns, on top of that, even Akai's person had been temporarily stolen, it was miraculous that there was no fatality.

If pushed to say, then there were many sympathetic points toward the islanders of Delf Island where they stayed.

That vampire called Tokihara had obtained strong trust of the islanders — starting with chieftain Bergel. Though it was unavoidable in order to rescue Inugami, and though Tokihara himself had tricked the islanders, making numerous victims in the shadows, a part of the islanders who were close to him had to bear considerably mixed feelings.

Naturally, people whose children and friends were murdered got angry first, many even showed gratitude to Kyousuke and the others who defeated that Tokihara and accomplished their revenge as a result. It was complicated in either cases.

Still holding those complicated feelings, the trade fair on Delf Island was held.

Lining up in the plaza was the merchandise the maritime caravan brought, next to them were the items 2nd year class 4 prepared. In some parts, there were also situations that showed aspects of a school festival. Chieftains of other islands were advancing their purchases from the catalog as agreed beforehand. But there was no appearance of chieftain Bergel therein. He seemed to be moping still.

Chieftain Bergel was said to be on good term with Tokihara, but as he originally said, he took the initiative to acquire blood donation from the islanders as an «*apology*» to the students of 2nd year class 4. He helped persuading the islanders who held disgust against vampires and gathered blood for Akai.

Because Tokihara who was one of us has caused troubles for the students of 2nd year class 4, said chieftain Bergel. That was unmistakably a rational statement.

But still, in his heart, he should have felt anger and hatred at the students of 2nd year class 4 for murdering his friend. He had to stifle that, and as the

‘*person-in-charge of the island*’, he had to take action that would benefit the enemies of his friend, how harsh a thing that would be?

“Asuka, first of all, blood has been collected.”

Ryuzaki brought a bottle containing blood to Akai as she rested exhaustedly in the shade of a tree.

In terms of volume, there was about 2 liters. Akai glanced at the bottle, she asked:

“...The blood type is?”

“No, I don’t know about that. Are you concerned about that kind of things?”

“Just try saying it. There’s no difference in flavor by blood type.”

Around Akai, there were Kaoruko, Harui and Hebetsuka. Summer sunshine blazed down on Delf Island. Even in the tree shade, the heat reflected from the beach thoroughly roasted their body. Harui fluttered her wings, sending wind to them.

“So it’s blood.”

So said Kaoruko after intently staring inside the bottle.

“This way of drinking.... It’s dull, I don’t like it too much though...”

“Don’t ask for luxury. As expected, you wanted to bite people’s neck or something?”

“Because the other party’s temperature and smell are also a part of the meal. But well, yeah, thank you.”

Akai received the bottle from Ryuzaki and finally put it to her mouth.

The thick liquid could be liken to tomato juice with lots of mediums, but still, the liquid that filled the bottle was none other than ‘*blood*’ itself. Blood that was extracted with syringes, was slowly being drunk up by Akai Asuka — a classmate, for some reason, everyone was watching that.

“...Don’t look so much.”

Murmured Akai.

“You don’t think anything in particular?”

“Eh, think what?”

“No, nothing.”

Unable to surmise the intention of her remark, Ryuzaki inclined his head, Akai bluntly said to him.

Kaoruko, Harui and Hebetsuka also seemed to not understand well what Akai was trying to say.

Instead, Akai asked this:

“...Is there any changes to Utsurogi and Himemizu?”

“Nothing in particular. They’re the same as usual.”

“Fun.... Then, Goubayashi?”

“Same as usual, but...”

Akai worrying about Kyousuke who turned into her kin was a normal thing, but an unexpected name was put out then, so Ryuzaki was quizzical.

“What’s wrong with Utsurogi and Goubayashi?”

“Maybe. Harao and Gofunkawahara?”

“No, there’s no changes. Gofunkawahara is working as a salesclerk at the trade fair, Harao is sleeping inside his coffin.”

“.....”

Putting down the bottle that had become empty, Akai made a serious face. Her skin’s complexion seemed to get somewhat better. Gloss and vitality was coming back. While Ryuzaki and the others were relieved, Harui, on behalf of everyone’s doubt, asked Akai.

“Asuka, are you worrying about something?”

“Yeah...”

Putting a hand on her chin, Akai nodded.

“Ryuzaki. Tomorrow, after we departed this island, I want you to gather everyone.”

“Understood. Is there something important again?”

“Yeah.... I’ll talk about the *‘Filter’*.”

“Utsurogi-kun!”

“Nn—?”

Kyousuke who was standing alone in the trade fair venue was called.

Even if he looked at the trade fair that was starting now, there was not much Kyousuke could do. He couldn't help making things for sale, and if he didn't have any sociability, neither was his appearance was one that wouldn't scare the islanders. In the end, he was bored out of his mind, so he was on the beach, gazing at the sea.

The one who called him just now was Sakuma Sachiko. In contrast to Kyousuke, she was suitable as a salesclerk so she should have been assigned to the trade over there, but it appeared that she was free.

Perhaps it was because this Albadanba was hot, Sakuma wasn't wearing her one piece and jacket she bought at the bazaar of the Knight Kingdom. It was flashy bondage fashion like when they first got transferred. Indeed, he was used to seeing it, but it was awfully mismatched when combining with the white beach, and some passion he didn't know well was spurred on.

Well, a skeleton doesn't have passion or anything though. After all, with only the reason that looking at her bouncing chest was embarrassing, Kyousuke averted his eyes a little.

"Has the salesclerk side ended already?"

"Yup, because it's selling well."

Sakuma said so with a smile and sat down next to Kyousuke.

From around her tailbone grew a spade tail, it was at this time that Kyousuke knew it for the first time.

"Sakuma has made various achievements, huh."

"Ah, yup. Thank you. I feel like it's not just me though..."

"No, this time was Sakuma's."

Kyousuke also did various things like rescuing Inugami, defeated Tokihara, saved Sakuma, but as expected, the MVP this time would be Sakuma. If pushed to say, Kyousuke's activity was plain.

"....."

"....."

Then, the conversation stopped.

The sound of waves surging toward the beach sounded awfully far away from

the tumult of the trade fair that could be heard in the back.

It wasn't strange or anything that the conversations broke off. Both Kyouusuke and Sakuma weren't good talkers, so it had always been like this since the time they talked in the library. Even so, they could just read books at that time, so it ended without feeling too awkward then.

"(...What's this?)"

Thought Kyouusuke.

It had nothing to do with the existence or nonexistences of books. This interruption in conversation had something else different from the time in the library.

"...There's something I want to apologize to Utsurogi-kun."

"Nn, what is it?"

"I have thought to use «*Temptation*» on Utsurogi-kun before."

Being told so, Kyouusuke reflexively looked at Sakuma.

It didn't look like she was brooding hard over it. Only the profile of the succubus girl gazing at the sea was there.

«*Temptation*» is the racial ability of dream demons succubus and incubus. It interferes with the mind of the other party and exerts strong influence on it. It's temporary, but it makes them feel strong attraction toward the user. Being told that she «*tried to use it*» on himself, as expected, even Kyouusuke wasn't calm.

Why such a thing? As Kyouusuke tried to say this, he shut his mouth.

If thinking normally, there wouldn't be so many situations that one expressly would expressly try to use «*Temptation*» on a classmate. Something like heartfelt reasons, he could interpret it as many as he liked. But in case that was correct, wouldn't it be too cruel to make the person herself said it?

"Really."

In the end, Kyouusuke said so.

"(What's «*really*»...)"

This is too much even for being simple, he immediately regretted his remark in his head.

“Sorry, Utsurogi-kun.”

“Ah, ahh, no, it’s not something, to worry about in particular, is it...?”

“But, Utsurogi-kun, you like Himemizu-san, don’t you?”

“Bu—.”

Despite having nothing to spout out, he unintentionally spouted out. He didn’t think Rin’s name would appear there.

I like Rin.

As expected, it is that kind of meanings?

Certainly, I’m attracted to her. So was his hunch. And Rin also doesn’t hate me, probably, he could sense that much. But he couldn’t plunge in further and get an answer. He had something akin to strong doubt to the fact that himself and someone else «mutually love each other».

*No, wait, however, what’s this speech of Sakuma? No, not that I can’t guess. I want to graduate from «**Doesn’t understand People’s heart Utsurogi Kyouusuke**» soon. But trying to understand Sakuma’s heart here was an exceedingly dangerous act. I don’t know if my heart can endure it.*

“Uu, uuuuu ... uuu...”

Kyousuke held his head.

Utsurogi Kyousuke hated two-timing. He felt it was correct to say this kind of thing clearly. But he didn’t know if he had enough courage to say it. How miserable.

“My training still has a long way to go...”

“Training, you did...?”

“I did. No, I like Rin.”

“...Yeah.”

When Kyousuke said that, there was a sound of a small gasp next to him.

“...But, Sakuma as well, it’s not like I dislike you so much, or rather...”

“...Yup.”

“I’m the lowest, aren’t I?”

“Maybe.”

Giggle, he knew that Sakuma laughed.

“Utsurogi, you’re not saying that to not hurt me, right?”

“That’s wrong.... I think. Probably.”

While he did say so, even Kyousuke himself didn’t know clearly. He didn’t dislike Sakuma, but did he dodged the question with ambiguous words only because he didn’t dislike her? Or else was he purely holding goodwill for her on the same rank as Rin?

In the first place, the conclusion is that I’m two-timing, aren’t I...? I didn’t clearly declare my intent, so it’s still barely acceptable...? No, suppose this was an out, can I clearly give an answer...?

“Utsurogi-kun is not empty anymore, aren’t you?”

“Being told that in this situation is really complicated...!”

“But I’m glad.”

Sakuma stood up, she brushed off the sand stuck on her bottom.

“I will work hard not to lose to Himemizu-san.”

It was a beaming smile. When looking at it directly, Kyousuke felt a little dizzy. «*Temptation*» probably wasn’t used. But he felt his heart jumped. He had no heart though. There was this stinging pain in his heart, somehow, feelings of guilt for being dishonest to Rin welled up. In other words, that might have been Kyousuke’s true feelings, here, he purposely put a lid on his heart.

Ding, class changed from *empty* to *lowest*. It was still unknown which was better.

“D—don’t be too hard on me, please...”

For Kyousuke, he had nothing to say other than this.

Next day, the party of 2nd year class 4 departed the Maritime United Nations Albadanba. There weren’t so many islanders who came to see them off.

All the goods obtained in the trade fair was to be palm off to Welkano company as initially agreed. 2nd year class 4 got this world currency, and used a part of that to have the company prepare materials. Starting from Welkano-shi, the maritime caravan said that they were going to stay in this island for a little

while longer, but the heavy cruiser branch school was heading straight for Werneus Peninsula in the southeastern part of the continent.

Werneus protruded out to sea in a form similar to Izu Peninsula of Japan or Italy Peninsula in Mediterranean Sea, it was said to be a region with very gentle racial characteristics because it was far from the Empire's dominion and had blessed climate and terrain. Human countries existed, but their treatment against other races was also very tolerant.

They planed to go north from Werneus Peninsula to the eastern side of the continent and aim for the eastern forest where Master Majina lived. Once they arrived at the eastern forest, they would probably be able to go back to the former world. With that steady progress, an optimistic mood was spreading inside the class.

"Yaa, Kyouusuke."

As Kyouusuke was gazing at the distancing Albadanba, Hino Akira came along to his place.

"Akira, is your seasickness okay?"

"Ahh. Well yeah. For now."

Even now, it was still unknown what kind of mechanism made this lightly floating fireball got motion sickness. But if the person himself said he was sick then he was, if he said not, then not.

When Akira came next to him, Kyouusuke restlessly looked around the surroundings.

"...Rin is?"

"I saw her talking to Kensaki just now. What's wrong?"

"...Ahh no, there's, nothing wrong in particular..."

Somehow, he recently came to feel uncomfortable that Rin wasn't next to him. It would soon be 3 months since they came to this world, in that 3 months, the time they spent together had been more often, so it might be natural. If she left even for a bit, he would get anxious. This tendency wasn't very good.

"You seem to be thinking too hard about things as usual."

"I guess so?"

"That's right. I think you can just do what you want ... but, well, perhaps that's

still too difficult for you, Kyousuke.”

So said Akira and lined up next to Kyousuke.

“As recreation, let’s think about something different.”

“Different?”

“For example, future movement of the blood clan.”

“That huh, I think that won’t be recreation at all though...”

But, Kyousuke was also worrying about that. Given the chance by Akira, he started thinking again.

The confrontation with the blood clan had met a big turning point here. The meeting with the ‘*King*’ via Akai’s body. Her betrayal was completely exposed to the leader of the blood clan. How would those guys move after this? Even now, he couldn’t guess at all.

Besides, the fact that they had to reach a conclusion with the blood clan remained unchanged. Even if they went back to their world, Akai’s peace couldn’t be promised. Thinking about that, another question welled up: *where is the stronghold of the blood clan?*

“I think those guys’ stronghold is on the New Continent.”

Said Akira.

The New Continent, that also appeared on the map of this world Selena had prepared. It was an unexplored continent located further south from Albadanba. Accurately, whimsy adventurers seemed to have set foot there several times, but it wasn’t clarified enough to talk about its full picture at all. Because the vampires were going through this Albadanba for their movements, that possibility was considerably high. But perhaps, same as 2nd year class 4’s route, they were just heading for the eastern side of the continent while avoiding the Empire’s controlled territory, that case was also plausible.

“Assuming it’s the New Continent, that means we’re going away from their stronghold right now.”

“Conversely, if it’s on the eastern side of the Old Continent, we’ll be getting closer to the enemy’s stronghold.”

Kyousuke and Akira pondered together.

“Speaking of which, everyone in the class has also defeated the Pawns.”
“Ahh, seem so. I think the class’ atmosphere is gradually coming together. Even compare to when Washio died, the unity is ... uuu.”

Suddenly groaned, ashes scattered from Akira’s body. He vomited.

“You’re getting sick, aren’t you...?”
“It’s not that big a problem.... Rather than that, what I’m worrying about is...”

While saying so, the amount of scattering ashes remained unchanged. It doesn’t mean that the deck was getting dirty, so it was fine. Kyouzuke tried to rubbed his back, but not knowing where the heck he should rub, he was lost at what to do.

It was at that time.

“Oh—, it’s Kyouzuke-kun and Hino-kun. Yaahoo—.”

It was Rin’s voice. When Kyouzuke turned around, not only her was there, but other classmates were also coming out in droves.

“Nn, eh? Is there going to be a meeting or something?”
“Ah, you haven’t heard? You know, Akai-san said that there’s an important story to tell everyone.”
“Akai said...”

Muttered Kyouzuke, he glanced at Akira. Although Akira was still spreading ashes everywhere, he nodded over here.

Akai said it was an important story. That surely was going to deeply involved with 2nd year class 4’s future course of action. Judging from how she was going to talk to the entire class and not only to very limited few such as Kyouzuke, Ryuzaki and Sakuma, as expected, Kyouzuke felt some changes. Probably, Akai also started to believe in the class’ unity.
And then, he felt pure anxiety about what kind of thing that much an important story was going to be.

The students lined up on the deck. There was also Zeku among them, Hakuba placed the altar on a wagon and was pulling it. They had said the entire class, so he probably think they should let Washio participate as well. He was a man deep in friendship. The fact that there was Harao’s coffin right next to the altar

was on Kyousuke's mind though.

Okumura, Gofunkawahara and Kuremori group was talking together. Zeku wasn't with Goubayashi, but mixed in with this group. Team leaders group such as Kensaki and Uozumi older brother, sport clubs group such as Saruwatari and Yukinoshita, when looking at them in this way, there were groups that had changed compared to before the transference, and there were also group that didn't.

Kyousuke's group that had the change called Himemizu Rin, also lined up on the deck like the other students.

In a place a bit away, there were Sakuma and Kaoruko mingled with Harui and Hebetsuka — the so-called Akai's friends group was having friendly chitchat. It seemed no strain remained in their relationship. Kyousuke patted his chest in relief.

"Ah—, everyone! Many thanks for the case this time!"

Standing in front, Ryuzaki shouted in a carrying voice. Speaking of which, Sakuma who was supposed to be the secretary wasn't there right now.

"We were able to departed Albadanba safely. It will take about 2 weeks to arrive at Werneus. That country seems to have hot springs, so after we arrive, let's take it easy over there."

A completely accustomed yet unpretentious greeting. «OOH—» voice came up in response to the word *hot spring*.

"And then, it seems Akai has a little important story. Would everyone please listen?"

Urged by Ryuzaki, Akai slowly came forward. The blood replenishment seemed to have finished, her gait was firm. The students silently stared at that. Standing in front, without clearing her throat, without any preface, she suddenly said this:

"First of all, I want to ask everyone,"

Saying so, Akai took out a glass bottle. There was traces that red liquid used to be inside. *So that's the bottle used to contain blood*, Kyousuke carefreely thought.

“Everyone, what do you think when you imagine me drinking human’s blood?”

The students were a little bewilderedly noisy. It appeared they couldn’t understand the point of Akai’s words.

“...Perhaps, I think there are individual differences, but normally, people should think that kind of thing is unpleasant. Everyone is receiving that calmly though.”

Hearing those words, Kyouzuke first and foremost thought of the opponents he had fought so far.

All the Pawns Kyouzuke had fought and defeated so far, were treated as ‘*humans*’ in the former world. Though for friends, for his own life, he had murdered them without any fragment of hesitation, he had felt a slight discomfort about that.

But Kyouzuke had meant to analyzed that, it was because he himself was empty.

Akai continued.

“The ‘*Transference Denaturation Gate*’ everyone has passed through has several effects. One is the effect to alter the human body like everyone did.”

Saying so, she started counting with her fingers.

“Another is Phase 2 — — — the effect to grant special ability.”

Here, Akai punctuated her words once and looked around everyone.

“And another one, is the effect to attach the ‘*Filter*’. What I’m going to talk about is this 3rd one. About the ‘*Filter*’...”

The moment she said that, an unusual phenomenon occurred on the deck.

The sky that should have been clear until then, suddenly started being shrouded by dark clouds. The sun was blocked, dark shadows fell. Akai reacted to this first, she raised her face. It was too sudden for a mere weather change. The classmates also started making noise and looked up above similar to Akai.

“What...?”

While the wind started blowing stronger, Ryuzaki's mutter was heard.

"(I have bad feelings about this...)"

The rustle inside Kyouzuke's chest got conspicuously stronger.

Akai had interrupted her lecture. When Kyouzuke turned his gaze toward her, he understood that she kept looking up at the sky, narrowed her eyes and bit her lips. With just that much, Kyouzuke roughly understood what kind of existence had created this sudden bad weather.

Beyond the sky, something the size of a speck could be seen flying over here at high speed. That thing flew at maximum speed, wind cladded on its body divided the sea like a shockwave.

"Everyone, step back!"

That might have been the first time Kyouzuke heard Akai's scream-like shout.

Immediately following that, roar and impact shook the hull of the heavy cruiser branch school. Warships are weak against impact from the side. The tilted ship almost capsized, but Harao kicked flying his coffin's lid and jumped out, he raised his ankh and barely managed to stopped it with his telekinesis power.

It was needless to ask what had happened, even so, everyone looked at Akai.

"Asuka, this is!?"

Stabbing his claws on the deck, Ryuzaki had already transformed into a dragon. Other students were also preparing for combat.

Rin had also jumped over to Kyouzuke's body and finished combining. But this was just after they used up the power of blood. They couldn't go Extreme yet.

"I don't know the name. But it's a Rook."

"I don't know the name. But it's a Rook."

"Rook!? A major piece!"

Are you saying that this dark cloud, the wind that started blowing stronger and stronger is but a fragment of the power of the blood clan. Does this mean Rook, a major piece has this much power?

From the other side of the boat, a man wearing military uniform slowly

emerged. A big cut ran on his face, his eyes dyed in red as if it was literally smeared in blood. Kyousuke felt that Rin's body that was sticking to his started shivering.

The man hardly did anything yet. He was just floating there in the air.

And yet, the surging spirit was enough to make them feel faint. It was a violent intimidating air that seemed to crush the heart of anyone opposing it. Most of the students who stood on the deck also stiffened like their movements had been sealed.

"Ridiculous...!"

A voice was heard disappearing into the wind, perhaps, it belonged to Goubayashi. He was kneeling on one knee, yet he desperately tried to move his body. But that body showed no sign of listening to him at all.

Harao was the same. That guy turned his arms around his back, puffed up his chest and took the usual attitude. But even if he tried to move from that posture, as if it was rigor mortis, his hands and feet didn't move an inch. Ryuzaki sunk both claws into the deck, and was desperately enduring. But he too, couldn't move his body.

Kyousuke was trying to step forward at least one step. His body was heavy like lead. He felt as if it were compacted with cement.

"Rin, please...!"

"So, sorry..."

Kyousuke groaned, Rin's vanishing voice returned an apology.

"I don't understand, but my body won't move.... I don't understand...!"

When he shifted his gaze, Akira also couldn't move and was just floating there.

Suddenly a marauder appeared, just by being there, he was overwhelming about 40 people.

At that time, from behind Kyousuke, a strong sense of pressure was suddenly born. That was mostly equal to the spirit released by the military man floating up ahead — by the Rook, or possibly even exceeded it. While his body and mind seemed about to be ground, Kyousuke was able to look at the owner of that

spirit with conviction.

“Akai...”

Her hair and the hem of her cloths were fluttering upward. The abilities Akai had shown several times until now, was only a glimpse to her true power, Kyousuke once again keenly recognized that. Certainly, Pawns had an unsurpassable wall to being Knights and Bishops, but further from that realm was another hard to overcome great wall to being Rooks and Queens. While the other classmates mostly couldn't move, only Akai Asuka calmly walked on the deck.

“What did you come here for?”

Arms crossed, in a penetrating cold voice, Akai looked up at the Rook. Thereupon, the Rook finally uttered:

“I came to execute the ‘*King*’s command.”

“Command? That guy’s?”

Strong anger and disgust spread from Akai’s words.

“(I will) destroy this ship.”

“What...!?”

Reacting first and foremost to the Rook’s words was Ryuzaki. To the unreasonable despotism, the others students’s voice baring their opposition came up one after another. The Rook snorted lightly, he descended on the deck. While they couldn’t move a single step, the students were throwing strong hostility to the Rook.

A critical situation. But if a fight broke out now, the only one who had any chances of winning was Akai.

*No way, does a ‘**Rook**’ have this much power?*

Kyousuke was about to ground his teeth.

Akai — arms still crossed — glared at the Rook. That moment, violent sound again reverberated, a part of the deck floor was suddenly blown off. Akai, as well as the Rook didn’t look like they made any move at all. But this was the exchange of the power they released and the result of that, Kyousuke instantly

understood.

The heavy cruiser branch school wouldn't be able to withstand the two's clash, that was being implicitly proven.

"The choice you can take is limited, Queen."

The Rook said.

"What will happen if two major pieces clash here? You should be well aware of that."

"....."

Still crossing her arms, Akai shut her eyes.

The Rook's words had an implication. *In the aftermath of the class, the heavy cruiser branch school won't end with just being destroyed?* Kyouzuke tried to feel around for the enemy's true purpose at least, he worked his brain. However, there was too little information to judge this situation.

What he could vaguely guessed was that distracting Akai was never the Rook's aim. In this place, regardless of whether he could destroy the ship as intended, or if Akai showed a will to abide in order to protect her classmates, or else she struck back at full power and that '*something*' was to happen as he had said, this man ——— more correctly, their blood clan would have some kind of '*gain*'.

Probably, Akai also felt that. She quietly closed her eyes, considered something, and finally opening her eyes, she said:

"Everyone, sorry."

"Eh..."

Without giving time to let others understand the intention of that apology, Akai kicked up the deck. Fist clenched, it vigorously attacked the Rook.

"...!!"

The Rook raised his right arm to receive that. Surrounding his arms, gauntlets with color closely resembling the black armor the Pawns wore, appeared. But even with the man's strength and those gauntlets, Akai's one punch couldn't be completely killed.

A blow of she who was in a truly perfect state, without suffering from Blood

Crave Illness, attacked the Rook.

The man flinched, that instant, Kyousuke and the others were released from the coercion. They started to move to support Akai, however, the person in question said this:

“Everyone, get away! And gather in one place as much as possible!”

Saying so, she kicked up the deck and floated in the air.

Naturally, it was beyond everyone to guess the meaning of her words. But abiding by her words, they immediately ran on the deck. Many students got together with their close friends, or protected the slow-footed ones. But Sakuma, Harui and the others worried about Akai and couldn't move away from her.

Akai's two arms produced bright red energy. That shined in the color of blood, ominously illuminating the deck wrapped in black cloud.

The Rook's two arms produced black energy. Sounds of bursting power hit the atmosphere.

The instant Akai moved strangely reflected in Kyousuke's eyes.

The Rook looked like he was endlessly enlarging that black energy, but Akai looked like she was adjust her power. The bright red energy — like matching its power with the black energy — was carefully expanding.

But before he could think of its meaning, the two had already changed to attack. Matching the black energy the Rook released, Akai also threw out the amassed power. An exchange shot exactly like coming out of anime or manga unfolded, red and black clashed against one another.

Light bursted. Red, black and light clashed, mixing together into light, centered on the clash point, it spread to the surroundings in one go.

That was a momentary event.

But Kyousuke had firmly saw it.

Light erased things it touched, magnifying its range.

And that also mercilessly attacked the students standing on the deck. Sakuma, Harui, Kaoruko, Hebetsuka who couldn't leave Akai, were swallowed by light together. Even the time to shout, to reach out his hand, wasn't given to

Kyousuke.

The next instant, the entire heavy cruiser branch school had already been swallowed by the torrent of light.

Together with a floating sensation, Kyousuke's consciousness broke off.

.....

.....

...

.

"...-kun! Kyousuke-kun!!"

A voice called him, Utsurogi Kyousuke slightly opened his eyes.

Right after that, he recalled that he had no eyelids. Simply, the consciousness that was gone came back. Holding his head, he rose his upper body. In front of him was a jelly-like, light blue, semi-transparent object, while moving its body up and down, it was calling Kyousuke's name.

Since it seemed kind of cool, he reached out his hand and pinched it.

"Fugyaa—!"

It screamed.

"What!? What are you doing so suddenly!?"

"No, somehow I just.... Sorry, Rin..."

Kyousuke reconfirmed the surroundings situation.

Apparently, this place was a sandy beach. The sound of rushing wave sounded awfully clear. The trees grown here were a little different from the southern countries' ones he saw at Albadanba. Besides, if pushed to say, then there were many rocks.

Was the ship destroyed and they drifted somewhere?

But in that case, Rin should have become super duper salty by the osmotic pressure and died. In the first place, they should have been at a position close to 2 weeks till the continent.

"That guy ... that Rook is...?"

"I don't know. When I noticed it, I'm already here."

“Akai as well?”

“Can’t be found...”

Kyousuke finally stood up then.

Did something happened due to the clash of those two’s power? And what happened just now? While feeling hazy, he guessed.

It’s spatial teleport, the so-called warp thingy. At that time, she had said to stay away, was that because people nearby would be sent to the same place? At that time, the students who are nearby other than Rin is....

“Did you not find anyone else other than me?”

“Yeah.... I thought to go looking together when Kyousuke-kun wake up.”

“Really...”

There were lots of worrisome things. There were also people he strongly wanted to confirm their safety.

But even if he thought, shouted about it in this place, it would be no use.

Where on earth is this place?

Who are the students who got sent here together with us?

First, he had to search from there.

Kyousuke decided to combine with Rin and commence a search in the area.

Dried Teacher Katsubushi - Lesson04: What to Do!? Me!!

My name is Katsubushi Dashihiko. Formerly the homeroom teacher of Municipal Jindai High-school 2nd year class 4th, now a dried bonito.

But perhaps, dried bonito will be no more.

There’s a possibility I may wake up to a new evolution stage.

Let’s talk in order.

The students of 2nd year class 4 was transferred to the other world, It’ll be soon over two months since then. My cute students have been making the best use

of their monster abilities to survive in this fantasy world. *Sooner or later, we will return to our world.* That is everyone's wish, they're striving to make it come true.

On the other hand, I who became a dried bonito can't even move by myself. Therefore, I have Sugiura Aya (attendance no. 26) who is in charge of the kitchen to shelter me, and I've been making delicious soup stock for the students.

Including me, humans who had changed to unhuman form have apparently passed through the thing called '*Transference Denaturation Gate*' and became our present appearance. This Transference Denaturation Gate doesn't just change one's form to monster, it also has the power to grant various special effects.

The transference incident itself was something schemed by a certain vampire group, but the story will be long if I delve further into that so let's stop it this time.

One can awaken to an ability granted by the Transference Denaturation Gate, it's the so-called 2nd stage thingy. This state is named '*Phase 2*'. Actually, I have also reached at this state, but in the class, there aren't too many students who have awakened to Phase 2.

It's called 2, so there is 3 as well, but this *Phase 3* seems to be the state one can reach by taking vampire factors inside their body. Speaking of students who have attained this stage, in the class, only attendance no. 5, Utsurogi Kyouusuke exists.

And now, perhaps, this me has gotten the possibility to reach that Phase 3.

"Sorry, sensei.... I also, didn't think too deeply about it..."

Showing just a little awkward face, Sugiura said.

"No, you're not bad.... We had no choice to do that in that place."

"But, sensei.... You must be afraid...?"

"Very, afraid. Perhaps, I, at this rate, may become a vampiric dried bonito..."

Apparent, the fact that I'm shivering has been exposed. Good grief, to show this kinda disgraceful behavior to the students, I may be disqualified as a teacher....

Yes. Taking in the *factor* means turning into a vampire. Presently, that guy Utsurogi hasn't shown any blood-sucking impulse, but according to Akai Asuka (attendance no. 1) who gave him that factor, it seems there's no mistake in thinking he has '*become a vampire*' in a broad sense.

And I too, have bathed in Akai's blood.

Due to a certain reason, there was a villain escaping with Akai's blood. Sugiura used my body to smash that small bottle containing that blood. As a result, a large amount of Akai's blood stuck to my body.

Being covered in my cute student's blood is not a big deal. Thinking about how it belongs to a beauty like Akai, it may even be a reward. But I now, am food ingredient before being a teacher or a man. That day, I never got into the pot to make soup stock.

After all, I bathed in Akai's blood.

Originally, a considerable process is necessary to grant factors. One won't turn into a vampire at the degree of being covered in blood from head to toes. Unless blood containing high-density factors is poured directly inside the target, or making them drink a large amount, the factors won't take hold inside them. Therefore, Sugiura who has bathed in blood just like me, doesn't show any sign of turning into a vampire.

But that's only in the case of ordinary living creatures. The skeleton — Utsurogi has no blood. When he suffered a serious wound — the bones of his entire body were smashed up — by Akai dropped her own blood containing factors, that guy managed to hold on to his life and turn vampiric.

There's a possibility I may become like that too.

«*Just by being splashed with blood*» will turn them into vampires, there aren't so many monster species that fits that description. But in the database Akai prepared, as well as the documents confiscated in the enemy's hideout, nothing could be found regarding dried bonito. Will I or will I not turn vampiric just by covered in blood like a skeleton? Even that is unclear.

I'm scared. I have this fear that I will transform into something not myself.

As far as I look at Utsurogi, that may not be the case. I heard that, that guy's personality is the same even if he has been turned vampiric. But, suppose,

suppose I was to turn vampiric. I, I won't become a devil-like blood-sucking dried bonito and attack Sugiura, right...?

"Sensei..."

Honno-san who was put in a corner of the kitchen, weakly called me.

"What is it? Honno-san..."

"You know, sensei, you're saying that you're afraid of changing into something not yourself."

"Yes, it's terrifying."

"But we have accomplished a dramatic transformation once already though...?"

Certainly, there's that way of interpretation as well. But that's that. This's this.

"Sensei, today, what are you going to do about soup stock...?"

"Sorry.... Please let me rest today as well..."

"Yeah, understood..."

Only one day has passed since that battle. To prepare for the trade fair that is going to be held on this island tomorrow, most students seem to be getting things ready. Since Sugiura also has the job of preparing cookings, she should've been busy, but now, she's going along with me.

"Sensei, it's okay. No matter what kind of form sensei become, I'll still be sensei's ally, okay?"

Saying so, Sugiura gently strokes my body. With this, the standpoint is reversed, isn't it? I slightly scoff at myself in my heart.

Now, at that time.

"Sugiura, is sensei there?"

A carrying voice echos in the kitchen. Sugiura parts her hand from me, she turns around to the direction the voice came from. However, this time, not her hand but many of her octopus legs are touching my body. They're a little slippery.

"Ahh, class rep. If sensei, then he's here?"

The owner of the voice is attendance no. 39 — the class representative, Ryuzaki Kunihiro. In this class, there are few students who know about mine

and Honno-san's situation, but Ryuzaki is one of those.

Ryuzaki peeks into the kitchen, he does a slight bow to me.

“Ryuzaki...?”

Even I myself think I responded in a miserably small voice.

“Sensei, more or less, I tried to ask Asuka as well, but as expected, it seems she doesn't know whether sensei will *‘turn vampiric’* or not.”

“Really.... How's Akai doing now?”

“We let her rest. The symptoms of the Blood Crave Illness is harsh so.... By tomorrow, we can collect blood from the islanders, but this painful situation will have to continue until then.”

Ryuzaki who said that has a grim expression. This guy has become very reliable class rep.

That we can accomplish the difficult mission called collecting human blood, and that the class is currently united as well, this guys have been a great help to all of those. After this, no matter what kind of crisis befall this 2nd year class 4, surely, he will be able to unite the class again.

That surely, is thanks to this man name Ryuzaki Kunihiro.

Compare to him, I am...

“Ah—h, sensei is fermenting again...”

“Dried bonito is already fermented from the start...”

“Sense~, your appearance is a dried bonito, but your filling is surely tofu.”

Sugiura gives an amazed voice, but as expected, deeper inside that, a tinge of a little worry is seeping.

“Sensei, sorry that I'm not too helpful.”

“No, you've been plenty helpful.”

At least, as a teacher, I can't cause Ryuzaki to worry anymore than this, therefore, I put up a toughest front possible and answer.

Ryuzaki smile a little, my heart is probably being seen through. Again, he bows slightly and leaves the kitchen. That guy should be quite busy for sometime. Seeing of the leaving Ryuzaki, I sigh. No, I'm a dried bonito so I can't sigh, but I

feel like I did.

The future where I become a blood-sucking dried bonito is terrifying. But before that happens, do I have no regret left as a teacher, as a dried bonito? Before the factors permeated in my body bring about a fatal transformation, is there nothing that I, the present Katsubushi Dashihiko can do? Thinking of Ryuzaki's back, the composure to think about that much is born in my heart.

"That's right, Akai..."

I muttered.

"What's wrong with Akai-san?"

"No, I forgot to make Akai drink my soup stock."

"Ah, really. Which reminds me, since then, sensei works hard to become delicious, so you want to take revenge soon, isn't it?"

Akai Asuka is the only student who drunk my soup stock and didn't say it was delicious. As Sugiura says, I want to fulfill my revenge.

But, this body is afflicted with vampire factors then....

"No, wait."

Possibly, that may be good?

My body was bathed in Akai's blood. That girl's blood has permeated in my body. That is to say, the thing Akai is forced to use up as to maintain life activities, the '*factors*' also permeated in my body.

If I can bring that out as soup stock and make that girl drink it, at least, it should be possible to make her a little more comfortable during the time until tomorrow?

"All right!"

I raise my voice.

"Sugiura, shave me!!"

"Ehh, ah! Yup!"

For a moment, Sugiura makes a surprised face, but she immediately switches over to a beaming smile and picks up the plane put in the corner of the kitchen.

Right after that, my scream as I'm being shaved reverberates inside the

kitchen.

With the help of Okama and Sakuma, my soup stock seems to have safely reached Akai. It was the first time those two saw me who became a dried bonito, so they were considerably bewildered, but they immediately recognized me as sensei.

By the way, that was also the first time I saw Sakuma's bondage fashion I often heard in rumors, so I was very moved. I'm glad I became a teacher, I thought so from the bottom of my heart.

Sakuma, who came to return the tablewares, told me that Akai's condition became just a little better.

At the same time of being relieved, I feel a faint disappointment. Akai's condition became better, that is to say, it's none other than the proof that factors are mixed in the soup stock that came from my body. My body is turning vampire. I'm already as good as half-transformed into a blood-sucking dried bonito.

"Sensei..."

Did she noticed that heart of mine, Sugiura sorrowfully mutters.

"Don't make that face, Sugiura..."

"But, sensei.... You really are going to become a blood-sucking dried bonito...?"

"May be I already did..."

Saying so, I look up to the ceiling (or mean to). Listening to my and Sugiura's conversation, Honno-san says «*Umm, I'm also here though?*» in a little want-to-disappear appearance, but for now, I decide to place importance on the atmosphere.

"Sugiura, suppose, suppose I become a blood-sucking dried bonito without any ego, at that time..."

"At that time...?"

"Please kill me with your hand."

Sugiura is surprised, she stares at me with those big eyes. Honno-san mutters in a small voice: «*Umm, what needs to be done for sensei to die?*». Certainly, I too, feel a lot of questions regarding that, but as before, I place importance on

the atmosphere and pretend not to have heard.

“Sensei.... Understood, but...”

“You’re a good child...”

I don’t listen to the words beyond «*but*». Because that will just dull Sugiura’s determination, surely.

That instant, I feel my entire body pulsates. It’s a hallucination. My body is a dried bonito. There’s no way there’s any blood flowing. But I recall, I have tasted a sensation very similar to this before. That was around the time when not so many days had passed since we were transferred to this world. The time when my Phase 2 ability — «*Infinity Regeneration*» awakened.

That time as well, I had this body-pulsating sensation and heat that seemed to burn and melt your body.

Ahh, it’s starting. I understand. There’s doubt, this is exactly the sign of awakening to Phase 3.

That is never a welcome thing for me. I feel as if a burning brand is pressed onto my brain. Despite I have no brain! Even so, I understand that the sense of pain that should have been lost is screaming. I stifle my voice, I writhe, no, I clatter.

“U, gu...!”

“Sensei!?”

“Finally, the time has come.... If I’m going to become a blood-sucking dried bonito like this...!”

“You, you can’t! Sensei! You cannot! I...”

Ahh, “*no matter what kind of form sensei become, I’ll still be sensei’s ally, okay?*”, she did say that, didn’t she?

But that’s no good Sugiura. I am a teacher, I am sensei. Sensei should be students’s ally, but students must not be sensei’s ally. The existence called a teacher is persistently something to be used by students, going any further than that, and the Board of Education will zero in on you, okay?

“Katsubushi-sensei!”

Honno-san also calls my name.

Sugiura reaches her hand to me. But I am already in a state where I can't even scream anymore. I feel my body gradually changing. The body that extended straight heroically like a wooden sword, is changing. **Shuu shuu**, smoke raises, and then....

Pon—.

Together with a light sound, the smoke bursts open, I roll on the floor.

No, rather than saying roll, it may be more correct to say that I flop down. My appearance is already no longer something like a dried bonito.

Yes, if I have to say, it's a dried opened fish.

I became dried food.

What's this? What just happened?

I can't understand what happened to my body, I look around. No, since I have no neck, I can't look around.

The heat and pain that seems to wrap up my body has completely withdrawn. I only turn into a dried opened fish from a dried bonito, I don't feel any changes other than that. Are you saying this is Phase 3?

However, as of now, I don't have any blood sucking impulse either. I'm still myself.

"Sensei...?"

Sugiura inclines her head, she is slowly reaching her hand to me.

"Sugiura..."

I also call her name.

Honestly, I'm relieved. I reached a new stage without becoming a terrifying dried bonito monstrosity. I can no longer make soup stock for everyone in the class, but with this, I can still stay in the kitchen. No, even dried food can make delicious soup stock. If infinity regeneration is still working that is, however....

"Sugiura, sorry. I made you worry. Apparently, I..."

Just as I start saying so, Sugiura who is reaching her hand to me, suddenly

stops.

“...Sugiura?”

“...Stink.”

“Eh?”

Immediately after that, Sugiura holds her nose, she takes 1 step, 2 steps back. I don't know how much the concept of *1 step, 2 steps*, can apply to that lower body with octopus legs growing, but for now, according to my former human sense, she backs off about that much.

Her face has a look like she saw something unbelievable.

“So, sorry sensei! This is a little ... impossible—! Impossible impossible impossible impossible—!!”

As soon as she says that, Sugiura holds her nose and dashes out of the kitchen.

“Sugiura!? Oi, Sugiura—!?”

Even if I desperately call, Sugiura won't come back. *What the heck is this?* Just when I think about asking Honno-san, she has closed her cover and collapsed on the shelf.

Honno-san seems to have fainted.

Apparently, I have become a dried horse mackerel.

Furthermore, if asked whether if this is Phase 3 ability or not, it seems impossible to tell. In the first place, I am an irregular in this class, speaking further, I reincarnated as an unforeseen thing like a dried bonito, so it's difficult to apply the existed data.

Akai, who took in blood and her complexion has become completely better, informs me so while pinching her nose.

“In the first place, why did he become a dried horse mackerel? Does Akai-san's blood have an effect like horse mackerel juice?”

“Please don't say anything disreputable?”

Similarly pinching her nose, Sugiura inclines her head, Akai sends a cold look to her.

“Because the appearance after reincarnating is dragged along by one’s mind to some extents. It’s pretty much because sensei is mentally rotten, and physically rotten as well, isn’t he?”

“Really—”

It’s not “Really—”. I really want to object. *If you say that, then that means the other guys were also changed to various appearance depending on their frame of mind.* [Notes]

But even if I was to say that, I feel they will just dismiss it as «*Because sensei is an irregular*», so I didn’t. Let’s just be glad that I didn’t become surströmming or something.

After that, Akai left the galley still pinching her nose. I am told that there’s something she wants to explain to the entire class.

“Shit, what am I going to do now...”

“...There’s no choice but to look for a method to return you to a dried bonito, is there?”

While pinching her nose, Sugiura speaks as if it is someone else’s problem. I become a little sullen.

“In the first place, why do you hate it so much. Aren’t you a daughter of a restaurant!?”

“Ours doesn’t deal with dried horse mackerel. I have a good nose you know—”

“Despite being an octopus!?”

“I’m not an octopus. I’m a scylla. There are cases when scylla has the lower body of dogs too, okay?”

“What are you doing saying your nose is good just because of that! If you keep making up settings after the facts like that, you’ll be ruined someday! I know that well!”

“I don’t want to be told that by sensei who suddenly became a horse mackerel.”

Ku—.

I have no comeback.

Dried horse mackerel is delicious. Because our grocery store deals with it once in a while, I know that well. But dried horse mackerel is food, never is it something to guide people. Even if a dried horse mackerel become a teacher

and started throwing their opinions around, that in the end, is only a nuisance to the students.

In my case, it's the opposite pattern where a teacher become a dried horse mackerel, but I guess that's not much of a difference now.

“...Even though you said you'll be my ally no matter what form I am...”

So I mutters.

“If it's dried bonito Katsubushi-sensei, then I can say that, but dried horse mackerel is a little...”

Saying so, Sugiura heads for the exit of the galley, all the while pinching her nose.

“Then—, I have to go to the deck to listen to Akai-san's story.... Sensei too, please think of a method to return to a dried bonito...”

As it were, Sugiura really did left the galley. What a cold-hearted guy.

I, still in a huff, send my gaze to the top of the shelf. Honno-san is still unconscious. I feel that her treatment is also quite rough, I secretly sympathize with her. For Honno-san as well, I guess I have to find a method to return to a dried bonito.

Shortly after I decided that, a mysterious light surges forward and my consciousness ceases.

How Harao Masaki Came to Acquire His Profound Cultivation

Sleep brings up a child well. Setting aside its veracity, it is something people often say.

The son of city council member Harao — Masaki was a premature baby. The cause was his mother's premature delivery. His weight at birth was only about 2300g. He was the eldest son of Harao family whose relatives were all celebrities of town. Many related people were thrown into a crucible of anxiety

due to his birth, but after that, Masaki rapidly grew without his health getting poor, or leaving any handicap in particular.

The facility of the city general hospital that he entered with his family's connections was good, the doctor in charged of him was skilled, well, there were various factors. But in the end, if asked why Masaki had grown healthily, the reason would be summed up in this next point:

Harao Masaki slept well.

“Ehh, then, next question ... Harao.”

Jindai high-school mathematics teacher, Tokiwa Renjurou could be said to be the archetype of teachers that were hated by students like the plague. He was a bespectacled gloomy middle aged man that was always high strung. To make it worse, his lessons were strict, and one could hardly expect any kindness during tests either.

Because it was the lesson of that kind of teacher, even in 2nd year class 4 that was a full house of unique individuals, their studying attitude was seriousness itself. The girls that usually looked down on teachers like Harui and Hebetsuka, only at this time that they squared off against their notebooks with serious expression.

The liveliness of the class, Himemizu Rin also seemed to be poor at dealing with Tokiwa. Never was she a stupid girl, but in 1st year, she got awful marks in one of his mini test and was made to cry in the subsequent supplementary lessons. Now, Rin acted as if it was nothing, but actually, her shoulders shivered every time Tokiwa passed by her.

But, during the lesson of that Tokiwa, there was only one student who grandly took a nap.

“Harao.... Oi, Harao, is he absent?”

Tokiwa raised his face from the textbook on the desk, he turned his gaze around the classroom.

Thereupon, Tokiwa discovered something unbelievable, **twitch**, his brows furrowed.

There in the furthest seat in the back, on the window-side of the class room, the student he nominated just now, Harao Masaki crossed his arms on top of his

belly, reclined his body to the back rest and was pleasantly snoring to the calm spring weather streaming in from the window. His face was covered by the mathematics textbook that was left open.

Washio Kouta who sat next to Masaki quietly poke his arms with a pencil, but he showed no sign of waking up.

Blue veins popped on Tokiwa Renjurou's forehead. Tension ran in the class.

"Hou, Harao.... You have some nerve to sleep during my lesson..."

"Oh crap..."

Twitching, the corner of Tokiwa's mouth lifted up, the voice his mouth put out was dark. Washio, in a slightly impatient appearance, strongly poke Masaki's arm.

"Mu..."

Finally, the textbook slipped off from Masaki's face.

Healthily tanned skin one couldn't imagine he was a premature baby at birth, a finely chiseled and somewhat ethnic beautiful boy. Then, Masaki snapped his eyes open, without yawning, without stretching, he rose his body.

Harao Masaki looked around his surroundings, in a deep and calm voice, he questioned Washio who sat next to him.

"Ahh.... Washio, t's thee who disturbed mine slumber?"

"Baa(ka).... That's wrong, Harao. Read the atmosphere. We're in class!"

Washio shouted in a small voice, then he glanced at the teacher platform, and further concealed his voice.

"Moreover, it's Tokiwa's class!"

"Fumu. Washio, addressing without honorifics is not praiseworthy. It's Tokiwa-*sensei*. You should pay respect properly."

Masaki's words were so admirable one couldn't think he had been magnificently sleeping in class.

"Harao.... Did you sleep well?"

While his temple was twitching, Tokiwa asked.

"Unfortunately, I haven't sleep enough."

Masaki clearly declared so.

“Tokiwa-sensei, if there’s no business, I’ll be sleeping again.”

“Stop fooling around! What do you think school is!?”

“Of course, school is an educational institute.”

Masaki’s face was deadly serious. Laughter came up in the classroom.

For your information, Harao Masaki is seriously serious. He didn’t have any fragment of intention to mock teacher Tokiwa Renjurou or joking around. Whatever the attitude, for Masaki, all teacher were people he should show a certain amount of respect, and school was an educational institute in order to acquire new knowledge.

But for him, sleeping was an important act existing in the same dimension as those things. Speaking further, precisely because he recognized this situation as *‘there’s no problem whatsoever to sleep now’*, that he was grandly sleeping. If it was a lesson that he should be awake and listen carefully, he would do so.

However, even if that was said here and now, it would just be adding fuel to the fire. Therefore, Washio who probably understood Masaki quite well, thought so in his heart but didn’t say anything.

“Tokiwa-sensei, what business doth thee has’t with me?”

“If, if it’s business ... of course there is!”

“Fumu.”

Tokiwa corrected the glasses that had slipped off, he knocked the blackboard with chalk.

“This problem! Try solving this problem! In case you can’t...”

“Very well.”

Without letting Tokiwa finished his words, Masaki stood up. Chest puffed up, hands put behind his back, he grandly walked. All the classmates who saw him off, were either worrying about him or sending an expectant look. That was the difference of whether or not they heard the rumors about Harao when he was a 1st year.

On the blackboard was a problem about proving inequality. When it comes to high-school mathematics, if you can’t understand even a little, you’ll be left in the dust in an instant. In fact, even in this class, there were already some people

who couldn't catch up.

Wherein, Masaki climbed up the platform without being timid, he took up the chalk and started writing numerical formula and proving texts with click clack sounds.

Until then, Tokiwa was gazing at that while shaking in anger, but soon, his mouth was wide opened with momentum to dislocate his jaws.

“That’s all, Q.E.D.”

The correct answer without a single word differed as if it was the result of peeking inside Tokiwa head.

Without even asking whether the answer was correct or not, Masaki briskly walked back to his seat. He pulled back his chair, sat down, then again crossed his hands and placed the textbook on his face.

“No one, must not disturb the sleep of Harao...”

3 seconds later, regular breathing could be heard from his seat. While Tokiwa couldn't say anything, an awkward silence descended in the class.

Should it be said as lucky? It was not too long before the chime informing the end of the lesson reverberated in the school building.

“Seriously, what kind of education are you doing!? Katsubushi-sensei—!”
“Na?”

In the staff room, Tokiwa shouted at the homeroom teacher of 2nd year class 4, Katsubushi Dashihiko.

Katsubushi who was grading a mini test, made an idiotic voice in response to Tokiwa's barrage and raised his face. While frothing at his mouth, Tokiwa pressed straight to him.

“It's Harao. Harao Masaki! That looking down on teachers attitude, I can only think it as rotten! What's up with that guy!”

“Your face is too close. Tokiwa-sensei.”

Katsubushi took out a handkerchief from his pocket and wiped his face.

“So it's Harao. Did he doze off during class again?”

“That's not something like dozing off! That is truly sleeping, true sleep I say! Of

all things! It was during my lesson!”

“Well, it’s because Harao’s way of thinking is a little different from ordinary students. I still don’t know well if I should respect it...”

The lanky teacher, Katsubushi said so while scratching his forehead.

“Irresponsible! Are still his homeroom teacher!?”

“It’s only been a little more than a month since I became his homeroom teacher. Anyway, I will apologize for how Harao has caused you troubles. I’m sorry.”

If he was politely apologized to, Tokiwa was also an adult. He couldn’t afford to flare up any further.

“Excuse me—! Is Katsubushi-sensei here—!”

At such a time, the door of the staff room opened. When the two people glanced over, a high schoolgirl with slender healthy legs stretched out from her skirt, was standing there holding some kind of package.

“Ahh, Sugiura, over here, over here.”

“Ah, sensei—. Thank you for waiting. This is today’s lunchbox.”

Saying so, the schoolgirl — Sugiura Aya put the package on the table with a pon.

Of course, the person who couldn’t silently watch this was Tokiwa Renjurou.

“Katsubushi-sensei, what does this mean!?”

“What you say?”

“You, are you making your student preparing your lunchbox!?”

“There’s no way that’s the case, Tokiwa-sensei.”

In a half-amazed voice, Katsubushi opened the package.

“Sugiura’s family opens a restaurant. Well, this is a lunchbox I bought by properly paying money. The ones who make it are Sugiura’s parents. My family is a grocery store, we often deliver there, so I can get it much more cheaper with that friendship though.”

Sugiura who appeared to be reflexively frightened by Tokiwa’s threatening attitude, was also nodding to Katsubushi’s words.

Tokiwa's mouth was flapping, but he was unlikely to be capable of logically pointing out anything. Eventually, he dejectedly dropped his shoulders. *Like student, like teacher*, although he swallowed those words, the feelings that lost its place to go continued to simmer in the bottom of his heart.

"Harao is a special student. I'll also try asking about it later. Asking his homeroom teacher last year."

Whether or not he knew the Tokiwa's heart, Katsubushi said so.

"Harao's homeroom teacher last year.... Who was it?"

"It's Kusunoki-sensei. Kusunoki Sufi-sensei."

Right, Tokiwa nodded. *Certainly, if speaking of a teacher that can carrying that eccentric Harao Masaki without any problem occurring, then there would be only her.*

But then, she....

"Well, Kusunoki-sensei retired due to marriage, it'll be difficult to contact her."

The voice Katsubushi muttered as he opened his lunchbox was very carefree.

"Good grief, I was nervous."

At lunch break, Harao Masaki who was as sleepy as ever was told so by Washio.

"Despite not listening to the lesson, you was able to solve that problem quite well."

"T's the difference in cultivation."

Masaki lightly answered, he took out a lunch box.

Around Masaki, the usual lineup of Washio, Hakuba and Shokuzura gathered. Without preparing to have lunch, they surrounded Masaki and was having idle chitchat.

The association with Washio started around the 2nd half of 1st year? Basically, Masaki had a personality that made him easy to be isolated in the class, the first classmate to invite him to play was Washio. Ever since that event, Masaki felt just a tiny bit of friendship toward Washio.

“Oi, Hakuba, did you know? Harao was a runner-up in the high-school quiz tournament.”

“Quiz tournament?”

“Harao is in the quiz club.”

“*Heh*”, Hakuba and Shokuzura looked at Masaki with surprise in their eyes.

That’s a fact. Masaki belonged to the quiz club. Nearly half the reason for his piled up cultivation was because of club activity. Him being the runner up was no lie either. Only he couldn’t win against the sleepiness by all means and fell asleep during the match, thus failing to obtain the championship as a result. Judging from Harao Masaki’s life, 1st year of high-school was a period with various turning points. The association with Washio mentioned above — naturally, his entering the quiz club was also caused by his homeroom teacher at that time.

“Certainly, Harao was invited by Sufi-chan. Ain’t that right?”

“That’s Kusunoki-sensei to you. Show respect.”

Unusual for Masaki, his gaze turned dangerous as he chided Washio.

“Kusunoki-sensei? Certainly, she retired in March for marriage?”

“Yes. My and Harao’s homeroom teacher in first year. She’s a teacher well-matched with glasses.”

Masaki silently continued his meal, he nodded.

Kusunoki Sufi. Born on August 16. Leo constellation, blood type A. The only woman who made Harao Masaki suffer a defeat in terms of ‘*Cultivation*’. A quarter of her blood seemed to descended from Egyptian, that was also the origin for her strange first name. “*Answer the question.*” was her favorite saying, a very strict teacher.

Show respect to your teachers, that was her teachings. At the same time, she was also the only adult other than family who recognized Harao’s lifestyle who couldn’t win against drowsiness unless he slept for more 12 hours a day. Harao, while respecting teachers, yet grandly snoring during class, was largely due to her influence.

If it’s possible, I wanted to learn a bit more under her, thought Masaki. Masaki had yet to give up the humiliation of the defeat against her.

“By the way Washio, are thee not having lunch? Eat thy three meals. Kusunoki-sensei has said it.”

“Ah, right. No, we are...”

Averting his gaze a little, Washio seemed awkward. Exactly at that time.

“Yaahoo—! Sorry to make you wait—, everyone—!”

The liveliness of the class, Himemizu Rin bounced her small body and cut in between Washio and Hakuba.

Masaki — without being perturbed in particular — was carrying the contents of his lunch box to his mouth with mechanical movements.

“Thank you for waiting. We finish our errand. Let’s have lunch as promised ... are~?”

Rin smilingly said, but immediately noticing Masaki’s meal, she inclined her head.

“Perhaps, you ate first with Harao-kun.”

“T’s only me who ate.”

Muttered Masaki, his chopsticks movement didn’t slow down at all.

“Ah, really? How about it? We’re going to eat with Tsurugin and Ryuzaki-kun, how about coming together?”

“I will be sleeping now.”

Saying so, Masaki put away his lunch box and took out an eye mask from his bag.

He indeed felt grateful to Washio that he made a friend, but actually, associating with a large number of people was tiresome. On that point, Washio had a really sociable personality. With that personality, he should make a lot of friends.

“Ah, Ha—Harao. My bad.”

“Why are you apologizing?”

Masaki inclined his head to the slightly diffident attitude of Washio.

“Himemizu, look after Washio’s meal. This guy has an unbalanced diet.”

“Oh, understood understood. Leave it to me.”

Rin cheerfully nodded.

“Is that also Kusunoki-sensei’s teachings?”

“Umu.”

“Harao-kun, you really like Kusunoki-sensei, don’t you?”

“I respect her.”

Saying only that, Masaki put on the eye mask and looked up to the ceiling.

Exactly 3 seconds after wearing the eye mask. Masaki’s consciousness went to dreamland. Just before that, he knew that Washio and the others was leaving the surroundings of his deck a little reservedly.

Eat thy three meals. Eat well-balanced food. Show some respects for thy teachers. Treasure thy friends.

All of which were Kusunoki-sensei’s teachings. Masaki’s father who was the city councilor never paid too much attention to his family. Was it related to how he was a premature baby at birth as well? Since the time he became aware of his surroundings, he felt that he was raised up relatively overprotected by all of his relatives. That kind of family circumstances had raised Masaki to a slightly arrogant boy.

As the eldest son of a distinguished family, Masaki had acquired all cultivations. He could study, he could play piano. Painting and calligraphy was also above average. He dabbled in martial arts as well. The one who took him down a peg was Kusunoki-sensei.

«Harao-kun, I heard it. They say you enrolled with the top cores in your grade.»

Soon after enrolling, Masaki who had become a notorious problem child was called out.

As mentioned above, Kusunoki Sufi was his homeroom teacher. She was a brown-skinned female teacher well-suited to the suit and the thin-rimmed glasses.

Since those days, Masaki was an arrogant student. While other teachers was at lost how to deal with him, Kusunoki who was homeroom teacher made a proposal.

«Harao-kun, will you have quiz match with me?»

In the quiz match, if you cannot answer, you have to listen to whatever the opponent say once, that condition was attached. Honestly, rather than that kind of thing, Masaki wanted to sleep quickly, but convinced that his sleep would never be disturbed again if he was to win, he decided to accept the match.

Masaki had entered the public school in deference to his relatives, but actually, he had plenty of room to aim for better private institutes, he was also confident he had accumulated miscellaneous knowledge on the level not to lose to adults around these parts.

His head was certainly excellent, but Masaki at that time didn't understand well how terribly lacking in the thing called flexibility he was.

Then, the first question Kusunoki issued was this:

«What goes on 4 legs, then 2 legs, and finally 3 legs?» (answer)

This seemed like a joke but Masaki couldn't answer that. His nose — like that of the Sphinx was cruelly smashed. The words Kusunoki said to the frustrated as she lifted her glasses, Masaki still remembered it clearly.

«It's the difference in cultivation, Harao-kun»

A promise is promise. Masaki hadn't fallen so low that who would break it. He officially entered the quiz club.

After the entering, various quiz battles between Kusunoki and Masaki unfolded. Parallel thinking quiz, cipher quiz, graphic quiz, trivia quiz. The questions Masaki issued were all cleared, whereas for a short while, Masaki was unable to deduce the correct answers to the questions Kusunoki take out at all. When Masaki sulkily fell silent, Kusunoki tightly lifted her glasses and said this:

«Harao-kun. Answer the question/»

After three months, Masaki also became able to answer Kusunoki's quiz fairly well. But the number of the defeats he had piled up until then was many. During that time, Masaki was made to listen to 'orders' such as *«eat your meals properly»*, *«treasure your friends»*.

When he was taught that she was going to retire for marriage, it was around the end of the 2nd semester. Masaki obediently blessed her, at the same time,

he further exerted to deepen his cultivation. *Until the time limit, I want to defeat her at least once*, thought he.

Neither before nor after this that he shaved his sleeping time.

But still, Masaki never could produce a quiz that Kusunoki couldn't answer. No matter how he deepened his cultivation, her spring of knowledge was far deeper than Masaki's. Masaki's cultivation had grown to the extent that no one in the same year could match him, even so, he was no match for Kusunoki-sensei.

Suppose he could outwit her even once, if he could make her do what he say.

What the heck am I going to ask her?

Even now, he was thinking that kind things, but in the end, he couldn't find the answer.

Answer the question. I can't even answer the questions within myself, so in the end, I may still have a long way to go.

I need not doing it now. If someday I was to get the answer, I want to have a quiz battle with Kusunoki-sensei again.

Masaki thought so inside his dozing consciousness.

"It seems to be quizzes."

"Q—quiz ... you say?"

This is going to be difficult, with that preface, Katsubushi Dashihiko who promptly contacted the former teacher Kusunoki, said so at the very beginning.

"Apparently, Kusunoki-sensei used quizzes to make Harao obedient. The one who can't solve it have to do whatever the opponent say, that kind policy."

As expected, Tokiwa was also astonished. Just as he thought what masterful method did she use, it was that kind of thing.

No matter how it was conditionally, for a teacher to «*do anything*» told by a student. As expected, it wasn't something praiseworthy, was it? Tokiwa Renjurou grimaced.

"Iyaa, it's envious, isn't it?"

"Katsubushi-sensei?"

"Sorry."

But apparently, so far, Kusunoki had never lost in a quiz against Harao.

“But well, I think Harao has also grown quite a lot. He was the runner-up at the high-school quiz tournament, you know.”

While saying so, Katsubushi was relatively enthusiastically looking at the memo.

Although there were worries that it might go a little too far, Katsubushi was a wonderful teacher overflowed with love for the students. That was why he contacted Kusunoki before anything else. On that point, even Tokiwa was forced to recognized.

On top of that, Tokiwa thought. *If I can win a quiz match, I can correct Harao's arrogant behavior.*

Tokiwa Renjurou was a mathematics teacher. Decades had passed since he immersed in the bewitching abstruse world of numbers. He had finally arrived here ... as a bachelor.

He had zero intention to lose in a quiz so easily.

“Katsubushi-sensei, right now, who is the quiz club's advisor again?”

“Certainly, there should be no advisor. Because Kusunoki-sensei retired. The students as well, there's only Harao remaining.”

“Hou...”

Tokiwa let light gleamed on the seemingly high-strung glasses and said this:

“Then I will be the advisor for the quiz club.”

“Ahh, as I thought, it became like that.”

The next time Masaki woke up, it was already after-school.

The teachers responsible for 5th and 6th periods, didn't try to wake the languished him, also at ending homeroom, the teacher in charged — Katsubushi-sensei was busy and didn't show up, so it seemed to have ended with only Ryuzaki the class rep conveying the necessary matters.

On top of Masaki's desk, a simple letter written with information was put. It was a piece of paper. This way of well-ordered writing was probably not Washio's. He didn't know who wrote it. Only that it was easy to read letters.

Masaki picked up the note and put it away in his bag.

There weren't so many classmates remaining in the classroom. The evening sun was shining from the window.

Now that it was after-school, there was only one thing to do. Grabbing his bag, Masaki left the classroom.

Washio and the other's figure were nowhere to be found. *That guy is in the baseball club so he must be busy. I too, as the only remaining member of the quiz club, have to properly protect the clubroom.*

Kusunoki-sensei retired, the third years graduated, the quiz club's clubroom had become excessively wide.

Someone issuing a question, or be issued, the competition with the depth of one's cultivation was also gone. Masaki never became especially sentimental regarding that. To continue protecting this profoundly memorable place by himself wasn't so bad either. Even the royal tomb forgotten in the sand and the king who slept there had happiness in his own way.

Besides, no matter how much he wished for it, Kusunoki-sensei was no longer here, even if she was to be reappointed, it was all but impossible while Masaki was still in school. The passed days probably wouldn't come back.

When he headed straight to the empty classroom that was turned into the quiz club's clubroom, Masaki noticed that there was shadow of someone else in the room.

".....?"

He felt doubt, but he wasn't timid. **Clatter**, Masaki opened the door.

Thereupon, a seemingly high-strung glassed middle-aged man was sitting, even then Masaki wasn't too surprised.

"Tokiwa-sensei."

"You came, Harao."

"This place is the quiz club's clubroom, but why is Tokiwa-sensei in mine clubroom?"

Entering the room, arriving at his seat, Masaki asked.

Tokiwa Renjurou — without answering that — softly put out a sheet of paper.

"Harao, that's a mathematics quiz I prepared. Try solving it."

“Tokiwa-sensei, answer the question. Why is sensei in mine clubroom?”

“...Starting from today, I am the quiz club’s advisor.”

Tokiwa said that in a voice like having swallowed a bitter bug, so Masaki was also a little surprised.

“Sensei is?”

“Any complaints?”

“No, there’s none.”

Masaki stared at the paper he was presented, he took out a pencil from his pencil case. *I see, indeed like a mathematics teacher, a well-ordered yet nasty quiz. But I don’t feel it so difficult. I feel the questions Kusunoki-sensei made were much more difficult.*

But, it’s been a long time since I solve a quiz other people issue. Even so far, I have done the mini test in class several times, being made to come to the blackboard to solve problems, but those times feel just a little different.

Why? He thought and suddenly understood.

“Sensei, the quiz club has one tradition.”

“What is it? Harao.”

“In case you can’t solve the questions, you have to do what the opponent say once.”

Saying so, Harao took out a big notebook from his bag.

“Sensei as well, let’s have sensei solve the questions I though up.”

“Wa, what...?”

Tokiwa faltered. But Masaki didn’t pay attention to it and forcefully pushed the note to him.

“You cannot? Kusunoki-sensei delightfully solved it though?”

“D—don’t compare me to her. But, fun, well, well—, I guess it’s fine.”

“You can choose one page you like and solve it. If you can’t, I don’t mind you switching to other pages.”

While saying so, Masaki felt a little fresh to the fact that himself had become so talkative.

When he glanced up, Tokiwa had opened a page with the same high-strung face as ever and was trying to run his pen on it. However, shortly after that, Masaki understood that his face turned blue.

“T’s the difference in cultivation. Tokiwa-sensei.”

Saying so, Masaki made a smile and smoothly solved the quiz Tokiwa thought up.
